MR. PRESIDENT, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT...

• IT'S ABOUT TIME WE LEARNED WHO REALLY KILLED KENNEDY.

• THE BOOK THAT CAUSED SHOCK-WAVES AROUND THE WORLD.

• CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE ABOUT THE GREATEST CONSPIRACY OF ALL TIME. $2.95

by MIKE ASHMAN

ASHMAN
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CRESCENT

"Courage is the one quality which guarantees all the rest."

Winston Churchill

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FOREWORD

This book is a new approach to solve the mystery which surrounds President Kennedy's assassination. This new approach has never been attempted before due to either lack of courage, or imagination, or both. It is thus, a careful analysis, based upon logic and rationalization, of not only those tragic days in November, 1963, but much further before and beyond. In order to analyze one event, one must examine the entire period in which this event took place. And in order to arrive at the evidence, one must first find the motive. For there is no crime without a motive, let alone a crime of such magnitude. But some motives lie beyond the surface of the ordinary, and therefore they are elusive and invisible. To uncover them, one must dig deep into human behavior and morality. The evidence, on the other hand, should not be confined to fingerprints, ballistics tests, and spectographic examinations. For these are useful and conclusive when the crime at hand is a simple one. But when there is a grand conspiracy at stake, such material evidence is neither helpful nor sufficient.

The dominant issue in this book is the understanding, or rather the willingness to understand, the true and complex nature of politics and politicians in the so-called democratic society in which we live. Such understanding would help unveil the mask behind which hides the politician with his true, calculated product of ideological subversion and human evil. The fundamental obligation for the public to possess an understanding and awareness of those evils lies within the public itself and within its consciousness. And such understanding is essential not only to guard against political evils, but to search for the truth, once those evils have been unleashed with all their destructive ferocity and foreboding consequences. It is usually easy for the public to fall a helpless prey when confronted by a barrage of patriotic speeches and deceptive tactics, carefully re-

hearsed by those who seek to assume the mantle of government; especially if that mantle is worn at so high a level as the Presidency.

After the tragedies of Vietnam, Watergate and the Korean rice scandal (to mention only a few), the public, more than ever, has become receptive to the regretful reality that politicians are not only fallible, but quite capable of indulging themselves in treasonable acts of the lowest level. What is really frightening is that the public seldom knows much about what actually happens, or has happened, let alone why. Most of the information released to the public is derived by news reporters from politicians and government officials, either directly or through their spokesmen. A vivid example for this monopolistic act is the lies we often heard about the number of American and Vietnamese casualties during what became known as the "Johnson War." In its efforts to hide the truth, the government was releasing figures which were a fraction of what they actually were regarding Americans killed or wounded, and many times the real figure of enemy troops. If one had added up those numbers of enemy casualties every week, which were usually in the hundreds, there wouldn't be one Vietnamese alive today.

* * *

President Kennedy's death has been an unaccountable and inexplicable perplexity for over fifteen years. It has aroused many speculations, allegations and rumors, all to no avail. Dozens of books, articles, television programs and interviews as well as investigations, both government and private, have all but failed drastically and unanimously to shed any light on who the real villains are. They talked about conspiracies, but did not tell us who the conspirators were. They claimed to be experts in criminology, but could not produce any logical explanation of a legitimate motive. They indulged in boring and tiresome details about guns and bullets, brown paper bags and grassy knolls, photographs and umbrellas, and about the life and death of a "lone nut" who may or may not have been the one who pulled the trigger. Millions of taxpayers' dollars were

wasted to produce a twenty-six volume biography which was aimed primarily as a political sedative rather than uncovering the truth. The so-called Warren Report should have been renamed The Life and Times of Lee Harvey Oswald. And just recently, a House Select Committee on Assassinations has spent more than $5 million on staff salaries, travel and expenses and wages for consultants, including ballistics, forensic and medical experts . . . all without any significant results or revelations.[1]

It is without significance which hired assassin fired how many shots out of which rifle. The significance is rather who hired the assassin, and why. The dilemma is that no one has yet dared to venture beyond such a scope of trivia, out of fear either of being laughed at and ridiculed, or of possible retaliation. There is no doubt that the conspirators, while plotting their scheme, had considered that no one would be capable of crossing the impregnable border from the unthinkable to the thinkable, and from the unimaginable to the imaginable. For they were men who, because of their high positions, were supposed to possess the highest integrity and rectitude. They were, supposedly, neither fallible nor reproachable.

There could be no other explanation as to why the greatest mystery of our time has, until now, remained unsolved, and will remain so as long as we haven't the courage to come face to face with the most harsh and shocking scandal in this nation's entire history. But no matter how harsh and shocking it may be, we have no other alternative but to live with it, accept it or at least try to understand it. It would indeed be more of a shocking scandal if we continue to bury our heads in the sand and refuse to believe that such a thing could happen.

In this book you will find not only the motive, but the conclusive evidence, of how Lyndon B. Johnson, together with J. Edgar Hoover, have successfully conspired to eliminate John F. Kennedy. It's about time we learned who *really* killed Kennedy. It's about time we learned the whole truth, come what may.

CHAPTER I

J. EDGAR & COMPANY

John Edgar Hoover has had tremendous and unlimited power in Washington and on Capitol Hill. One could easily say that very few had dared to defy him out of fear, and many had chosen to join forces with him, since it is always safer and more comforting to be on the side of power and authority. People in general are inclined to be friendly to the local policeman or sheriff for the simple psychological fact that it gives them a good feeling of security and assurance. This is perhaps the same phenomena which lies behind religion; because religion is law and authority; and because it is pure and honest. Most people regard a policeman in the same manner they regard a priest or a rabbi, in the sense that they all share the same characteristics of honesty and integrity, or at least theoretically they do. When people befriend a policeman, they befriend the law and therefore they feel safe and protected. For people's general impression is that a policeman is a man who is automatically on the side of the law, simply because he is the one whose duty is to enforce it. And what policeman, whose basic duty is to apprehend outlaws, could possibly be an outlaw himself? But if people take pride in their acquaintance of the local policeman, it should not be difficult to imagine the amount of honor that would be bestowed upon them through the acquaintance of the number one cop in the country.

People like and admire power and authority. What people do not like is weakness and failure. They may, at times, resent authority, but given a choice, most people would rather associate themselves with power. And the more powerful a public figure becomes, the more inclined people are not to oppose him; and the more reluctant not to satisfy his thirst for aggregate power.

Until his death in May, 1972, J. Edgar Hoover had reigned for so many years over the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the most powerful and the most respected police organization in the world. Hoover had reigned over the Bureau in a dictator-like manner and ruled with an iron fist. Presidents, attorneys general, senators and others, not only feared him, but dared not fire him lest they may not escape his venomous wrath. Under Hoover's dictatorship, the Bureau had functioned quite independently from the rest of the Washington bureaucracy. It was a government within a government, and Hoover was that government. His word was law.

Professor Thomas I. Emerson of Yale Law School wrote that the "reason Hoover . . . has risen to his present position of power is that Presidents have left him alone. Attorneys General have left him alone. And . . . the press has left him alone—except when he helped them achieve some notoriety . . . these overseer groups, particularly the government in Washington, have permitted Hoover to reach his unique position—and the Bureau with him—out of both myth and practical political fear." It was not possible to "judge his power . . . without feeling the impact the Bureau itself has through threat of action. Politicians have drawn back from attacking the Bureau for years."[1]

And Hoover had a special kind of relationship, not only with presidents, but "with key members on the Hill to keep other people from attacking him." As a result, Hoover had "risen to preeminence not solely on [his] capabilities but also with the assistance of other elements of government and through failures in our democratic society."[2] Emerson goes on to say that the Director was "highly sensitive to criticism and reacted savagely to crush the critic. Sometimes the blows came directly from the Bureau; on other occasions from its allies." It was clear, then, that Hoover was "striving to achieve the status of untouchability,"[3] and achieve it he did.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Hoover's "untouchability" and his brutal power to crush his enemies and critics, have kept the murder of John Kennedy an unsolved puzzle. And if presidents and attorneys general were frightened of him, how could it be conceivable

that ordinary citizens, with virtually no power whatsoever, be able to point an accusing finger at him? Nor is it difficult to perceive how impossible it has been to unveil the truth when Hoover's President was no one but Lyndon Johnson himself. For the combination of such dominion and omnipotence would more than suffice to ward off and silence any voice of doubt, or the slightest attempt to investigate.

In a recent study of the FBI, it was concluded that the most serious problem about the Bureau had been Hoover's unaccountability to his ostensible superiors. As Professor Vern Countryman observed, the "role of the presidency, the Congress and the courts in controlling the FBI" had been almost nonexistent. "The only time Congress gets an official look at the FBI is when Hoover makes his annual appearance before the House Appropriation Subcommittee and the way the members of that committee fawn over 'the great man' is pitiful. They never ask him a critical question. So there is virtually no one in a position to control Hoover."[4]

In the fall of 1971, a conference on the FBI's role in American life was held at Princeton University. The chairman of the conference wrote a letter to Hoover requesting him to send a representative to attend the hearings and defend the FBI. Hoover flatly refused to send anyone on the grounds that "the basic facts on how the FBI is organized and how it discharges its duties have been so well known for so long, and to so many responsible persons, that they are obvious to all except those who are so blind that they do not wish to see." And those "basic facts," Hoover added, "if fully developed and exposed to public view" could only prove "that the FBI is a lawfully composed and operated public agency, staffed by honest and reasonably intelligent citizens . . ."[5] Hoover could hardly have given the conference officials at Princeton, as Tom Wicker wrote, "a more solid justification for going ahead with their [investigation] . . . There was the Director, after all, stating publicly and blatantly that no inquiry into the FBI was needed because all the basic facts were known, when it was the belief of the sponsors that an inquiry was needed precisely because the FBI told the public too few of the

'basic facts' about its operation and hence that public had no real way to know how . . . the Bureau functioned."[6]

It is quite possible that some of Hoover's men were honest and sincere, but those men were not aware of what Hoover's FBI was all about. And those who had become aware of Hoover's deeds, either left voluntarily or were forced out when they voiced the slightest disapproval of his Gestapo tactics. One of the men who was forced to retire was William C. Sullivan, the Bureau's number three man. In an interview with Ovid Demaris, Sullivan said that Hoover "had a very cunning, crafty, shrewd mind . . . and he could make fools out of senators and congressmen. He'd wrap them right around his little finger. He was a master con man . . .[and] one of the greatest con men the country ever produced, and that takes intelligence of a certain kind . . ."[7]

But Hoover's "lawfully operated" Bureau had more often than not used its unbridled power "in violation of the most fundamental American rights," writes Professor Emerson. He adds that ". . . there is grave danger of an expansive and intensification of its unconstitutional activities. The potential is frightening enough that to speak of the possibility of a police state [under Hoover] is not inappropriate. It is in this context that its most controversial methods–electronic surveillance and the use of informers–and its prime weapon of intimidation–the collection of data about individual citizens–need the closest possible scrutiny."[8]

Many people have questioned the real mystery behind Hoover's indisputable power and indestructibility. What was his real source of power that had enabled him to reach such a unique status in Washington, whereby everyone had feared him, presidents included? According to Sullivan, Hoover's real source of power was blackmail of the worst kind. He had gathered a huge collection of dossiers on politicians and other individuals in "high-ranking positions." These dossiers were gathered in the course of so many years and contained information that was extremely harmful or damaging to those individuals, such as their sexual, financial and other private matters. He would then imply that he possessed such information and would not

hesitate to use it against them, should they try to dislodge him or even be critical of him. "That placed him in a position of power and they were all afraid to get rid of him."[9] Emanuel Celler, who was chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, agrees with Sullivan that Hoover's source of power was "derived from the fact that he was the head of an agency that had tremendous power, power of surveillance, power of control over the lives and destinies of every man in the nation. He had a dossier on every member of Congress and every member of the Senate."[10]

There is no doubt that Hoover had indulged in dangerous and illegal telephone tapping of congressmen and senators as well as thousands of other innocent individuals who had committed no crime. Some of those individuals were blacks, and hence they were liberal. Blacks, according to Hoover, were automatically dangerous. Most blacks were opposed to the war in Vietnam and therefore they were labelled "Communist inspired."

By the end of 1970 and the beginning of 1971 the level of criticism against Hoover had reached an unprecedented degree. Congressman Hale Boggs, then House Majority Leader, accused Hoover of tapping the telephones of congressmen and senators. Boggs charged that the Bureau had adopted the "tactics of the Soviet Union and Hitler's Gestapo," and he demanded an immediate inquiry, and Hoover's resignation. Hoover, however, did not resign and there was no inquiry.[11] It should be noted that Congress was not in the least outraged to know that Hoover had 6.8 million files and 55 million index cards on private citizens.[12] It should also be noted that files had existed on senators and congressmen for quite a long time and they had either known about them, or, were made aware of them by Hoover. The fact that no one could stand up and make a charge until it was too late, is not hard to understand. It took politicians a number of years to muster enough courage to get around to Hoover. But then they were not only quite convinced that he was dead, but they made sure that he could not reach out from his grave with an ax and cut their heads off.

It has been reported that Hoover had tape recordings about Martin

Luther King's alleged extramarital sexual activities, and had threatened King to divulge the contents of those tapes to his wife, Coretta. According to a story in the Washington Post, Hoover had in effect offered transcripts of those tapes to certain newsmen.[13] Benjamin Bradlee, the editor of the Post refused to see the transcripts because he thought they were not only "offensive," but in clear violation of the law.* Another source of Hoover's power was rendering services to those who praised and glorified him. Such services would vary from simple tasks such as having his friends and supporters met by an FBI man at airports to facilitate passport and custom formalities, to intimidating and disrupting the lives and activities of his friends' enemies. Other services (as we shall see later—since it is the core of this book) were the plotting to assassinate as a final solution to eliminate a foe or an enemy.

In his book, We Band of Brothers, Ed Guthman wrote that most people have a high regard and a great respect for the FBI simply because of their ignorance about the true nature of that organization and perhaps of the image of Inspector Eriskin as played on television by Effrem Zimbalist, Jr. Guthman wrote, "I came to the Justice Department with considerable respect for the FBI and a good deal of regard for Hoover. My opinion was formed not so much by what I had read as by observing the FBI in action, for during the fourteen years I was a reporter in Seattle I had worked closely many times with Hoover's men. But like many persons who came from civilian life to the Justice Department thinking nothing but the best about the FBI, seeing Hoover at close range was a revealing and ultimately embittering experience . . ." And he added that after working at the top level in the Department of Justice he "could no longer believe him."[14]

Robert Wall is a former FBI agent who had joined the Bureau in 1965. After five years he "had begun to loathe himself" and was "sorely disillusioned" by the way the Bureau had functioned. Wall is

*It was considered a federal crime in 1964 and 1965 to disclose the results of a wiretap.

convinced that "the threat to the security of the country was not the anti-war or civil rights movements, but the government itself, which refused to respond to the voices dissenting, and the police agencies employed to suppress those voices." Writes Wall, "I was both naive and apolitical. I thought of myself as an intense idealist and was convinced that the FBI was an organization in which integrity was highly valued. To me the organization was above all a protector of the innocent public and only secondarily the relentless pursuer of wrongdoers. In short, I was an ideal candidate for the job. I would not question; I would simply learn to do as I was told, content to believe that the FBI would never direct me wrong. This belief managed to survive my first two years in the Bureau . . . It was when I was assigned to work in internal security in Washington, D.C., that I began to have my first serious doubts about the integrity of the organization, its motives and its goals."[15]

Among his many duties as President Kennedy's appointments secretary, Kenneth P. O'Donnell was a liaison man with the FBI. According to O'Donnell, Hoover was "ridiculous" in overplaying communism and the communist threat to the United States. In an interview with Ovid Demaris, O'Donnell disclosed that "once a month, Mr. Hoover used to deliver a report on the status of the Communist Party in the United States, which if I've ever seen ridiculous documents, that probably is number one."[16] And Sullivan could not agree more with O'Donnell. Sullivan is certain that Hoover was not at all sincere about the threat of the Communist Party in this country. "He knew the Party didn't amount to a damn. But he used the Party as an instrument to get appropriations from Congress. The Communist Party in this country has never amounted to anything since the late 1940's and yet it was built up as though the damn thing was a great threat to the country,"[17] said Sullivan.

Yet it was Sullivan who had worked closely with Senator Joseph McCarthy during his anti-communist mania. He recalls that "we were the ones who made the McCarthy hearings possible. We fed McCarthy all the material that he was using."[18] On February 9, 1950 in Wheeling, West Virginia, McCarthy had made a statement that some

of the men who worked for the State Department were actually communists. He announced to a group of Republican women commemorating Lincoln's birthday that "I have here in my hands fifty-seven cases of individuals who would appear to be either card-carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping shape our foreign policy." When he repeated his charges on the floor of the senate a few days later, the number of communists had grown to eighty-one, forgetting that the number he had mentioned at Wheeling was only fifty-seven. Notwithstanding, Hoover was keen on bailing out his demagogue friend in the senate and issued an order to Sullivan and other agents to "review the files and get anything you can for him." But there was hardly any evidence to support the senator's statement, much less a specific number of communists upon which the senator could not make up his mind.[19]

Would it be surprising if some day in the future we would find out, to our dismay, that Senator McCarthy himself was indeed a communist agent working for Moscow? And that all the noise he was making was nothing more than a smoke screen; and that he was using reverse psychology as a diversionary tactic to delude and deceive gullible and well meaning Americans?

If one could find it easy to understand the nature of the political soil of the 1950's and that era's way of thinking as opposed to the 1970's so-called liberalism, one may not find it so easy after all to comprehend how the American people, who have ignored reality for so long, still see Hoover as the same "wonderful man" who protected us from gangsters and the evils of communism those many years. Yet the only logical interpretation would be that it is almost impossible to erase from the minds the "perfect image" which, despite our mature awareness, we refuse to have altered out of fear of admission that we have been for so long misled and deceived.

Tom Wicker observed that the "public—gulled . . . by the Bureau's incessant propaganda until recent years loved it all; and what considerable percentage of voters Washington believed were still devoted to J. Edgar Hoover at his death was suggested by . . . President

[Johnson's] funeral oration and by Congress' decision that his body should lie in state, where Lincoln and John Kennedy had lain. There was little or no outcry when the Director, guardian of liberty, spoke up for Joe McCarthy, called Martin Luther King a liar, and for years singlehandedly held up congressional passage of the consular treaty with the Soviet Union."[20]

Hoover called Dr. King a "notorious liar" because the civil rights leader said that certain FBI agents were Southerners. On the other hand, Hoover described former Attorney General John Mitchell as an "honest, sincere and very human man." He added that "there has never been an attorney general for whom I've had higher regard."[21] This was the director's way of saying thank you to John Mitchell who had made it clear that Hoover could remain in office as long as he lived or wanted to. As of this writing, John Mitchell is still in prison because of his part in the Watergate conspiracy. One might wonder if there would ever have been a Watergate had Hoover lived. He certainly would not have allowed the best Attorney General in history to go to prison. Richard G. Kleindienst was another attorney general for whom Hoover had some affection, perhaps not as much as he had for Mitchell. Kleindienst was also convicted for his part in the Watergate scandal. He was also convicted for "misconduct in office" and had lied several times to the Senate Judiciary Committee during his confirmation hearings regarding the involvement in an anti-trust suit against ITT. Kleindienst recalls that Hoover had been cordial towards him, "I was standing in the door, and he clapped me on the back and he said, 'Kleindienst, do you know why I like you?' I said 'No, sir, Mr. Hoover. Why?' He said, 'Because you and I have the same enemies.' "[22]

Whatever happened to our great democracy? Whatever happened to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Had we become so cowardly to the extent that we could not dare to speak out against Hoover lest we may be tortured, imprisoned or exiled to Alaska? One could easily understand how helpless the Russian citizens are or how the entire German nation became terrified and voiceless in the face of the rattling sounds of machine guns and the pre-dawn Gestapo

door-knock. But what is so hard to understand is that in an extreme democracy such as ours, we had no courage to stand up and rebel against a despicable bully and a self-imposed tyrant. Outspoken Harry Truman could relieve General McArthur of his command, but would do nothing to Hoover when the latter openly accused him of weakness in the face of communism. And when the Kennedys came to power and tried to put an end to Hoover's tyranny, they had indeed underestimated his venomous ability to strike back and they were fatally stung in broad daylight.

In 1978, FBI Director Patrick Grey was indicted on charges of illegal wiretapping. It was the first time ever that an FBI director was indicted. And when a newsman asked the Attorney General Griffin Bell whether he could have indicted Hoover on similar (or even more serious) charges, he declined to answer the question. But the fact is that Mr. Carter's Attorney General would not have dared to sneeze in Hoover's presence, let alone press charges against him. Such is our double-faced government and such is our democracy.

Despite Hoover's reputation for rewarding his friends and punishing his enemies, criticism, nevertheless, could not be totally suppressed and eventually found an outlet through the mass media. Westbrook Pegler wrote that Hoover was "spoiled [because] the American press has treated him as a sacred cow . . ." and that he had received "entire credit for some jobs in which other agencies took part." This was in reference to the German espionage agents who were discovered by the Coast Guard off Long Island and later the FBI was notified. Pegler went on to say that Hoover "is a great personal press agent, and he has pet writers, or stooges, with access to big newspapers and magazine circulation who scratch his back in return for material that glorifies Edgar Hoover and the G's."[23]

Columnist Jack Anderson wrote on May 11, 1971 that the "tireless guardian of the nation's moral, J. Edgar Hoover, has collected more than $250,000 in royalties from three books researched and ghost written for him by FBI agents on government time. This is an offense, if it had been committed by some other government officials, that the FBI might have been asked to investigate. For the

money rightfully should have gone to the taxpayers, who paid the salaries of the FBI researchers and writers."[24]

One of those books was entitled Masters of Deceit for which Warner Brothers had paid Hoover $50,000 for movie rights. Because the movie was never made, Hoover instead, rewarded Warner Brothers by giving it his approval and blessings to embark on the production of the well known television series "The FBI," which has been religiously watched by 45 million Americans beginning in 1964. But the payment of the $50,000 to Hoover was the reason why Warner Brothers was rewarded the contract.[25] The choice of Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. by Hoover as his successor had contributed heavily in shaping the minds of those 45 million Americans. On the one hand, the television show was "prefabricated" in such a way that it has become a good case study of what goes into the preparation and application of FBI propaganda. On the other hand, Hoover was turning seventy-one and the Bureau needed a fictitious replacement "to convey the image" of youth and rejuvenation. Inasmuch as the producers of the series had claimed that the programs were actually based on "real cases," it has been discovered that most of the plots were the work of imagination and had little or no relation to the real world of crime.[26] Some plots have gone a bit further, to portray the FBI as a protector of civil rights, when in reality they were designed mainly to offset the "great deal of criticism for its handling of civil rights violations in the South."

And so "The FBI," instead of being "real cases," were indeed cases of FBI deceit due to the fact that each show had begun by the voice of a narrator giving the date of the crime and ended "by announcing the prison terms handed out."[27]

Despite his age, Hoover was not by any means senile. He was shrewd, "crafty and astute" until the last day of his life. He has been described by some who were close to him as an "egomaniac," and the older he got, the more conceited and vanity-stricken he became. Flattery was his weakness, and the more flattery he received the more he grew accustomed to it. This perhaps could explain the true traits of a dictator's personality that Hoover had possessed all his life.

A dictator not only loves praise but demands it. And a dictator not only abhors criticism but tries to silence it.

A few years ago an ex-marine, armed with a submachine gun hijacked a TWA plane from California to Italy—perhaps the longest hijacking in history in terms of distance. When the plane landed in New York to refuel, the FBI tried unsuccessfully to prevent it from taking off. After the pilot returned to the United States he criticized the FBI for mishandling the matter and endangering many lives. When Hoover heard of the pilot's criticism he tried to have him fired. When TWA refused to comply, Hoover retaliated by issuing an order "that no agent was to fly on any TWA plane."[28]

There are many cases of agents being transferred to undesirable locations, demoted, or even fired because they had voiced the mildest criticism of Hoover and his Bureau.

According to Sullivan, Hoover had a long list of hate, "he hated liberalism, he hated blacks, he hated Jews—he had this great long list of hate. Anyone that had any liberal views was persona non grata. He called them pseudo liberals, but he pronounced it 'swaydo.' It was always 'swaydo' and nobody dared to correct his pronunciation. As far as he was concerned, there never was a real, genuine, sincere liberal or intellectual. They were all 'swaydo' this or 'swaydo' that."[29]

After eight years of uninspired conservatism and dull stagnation under President Eisenhower, the liberal and intellectual Kennedys had finally taken the reins. The new President, his brother, the cabinet and staff of advisers were quite a new and different breed of people. They were mainly comprised of those "swaydo" liberals and intellectuals whom Hoover deeply despised. They were young and revolutionary spirited. And so the Kennedy "New Frontier" men have set out to change and revolutionize the old and outmoded methods and ideas that have stagnated for decades. But there always are those old, bureaucratic, and close-minded fools who see change as a direct threat to their very livelihood. The more advanced people become in their age the more they are apt to resent change. For change necessitates the adoption of whole new ideas in lieu of the

old and tried ones. Change means exploring the unexplored and challenging the unchallenged.

Change could also mean replacing those who oppose change. This was the dilemma with which Hoover had found himself face to face. It was no secret that Hoover and the Kennedys were not compatible. And it was no secret that, sooner or later, Hoover would have to abdicate the throne. Would he allow this to happen in his old age? Is he going to wait and let those young radicals dump him like a sack of potatoes after forty years of glory and limelight? Is this the reward for his great services to his country? And, if miraculously he should be allowed to remain, is he capable of being pushed around and humiliated by a "child" attorney general? To him, either case was deplorable and, as far as he was concerned, there was only one alternative and one only!

* * *

Lyndon Johnson's friendship with Hoover dates back to the 1920's. They had lived on the same street in Washington for forty years and they had walked their dogs together. Former Attorney General Ramssey Clark said that Johnson and Hoover not only "had lived across the street from each other," but that Johnson had named his beagle J. Edgar.[30] Clark believes that Johnson "was extremely cordial to Hoover, always anxious to have him involved." He did not elaborate as to what sort of involvement had taken place between them. But Sullivan acknowledges that Hoover had rendered certain unusual services to Johnson. Among those services was a request by Johnson to "review the FBI files" to see if some "derogatory information" could be found on Senator Barry Goldwater or any member of his staff that could be useful to Johnson in the 1964 presidential campaign.[31] Instead of shooting Goldwater in the back, Johnson's gun had backfired on him when his closest friend of twenty-five years, Walter Jenkins, was arrested in a YMCA men's room on homosexual charges. Such a development had sent Johnson's campaign headquarters into complete panic. It was reported

that Johnson, in an attempt to use the power of the presidency, tried to persuade a doctor in Washington to issue a public statement denying that Jenkins was a homosexual and that, instead, he had suffered a brain injury that caused him to act in a "peculiar, unusual manner on this particular evening." To Johnson's surprise, the doctor was too honest to comply, even though the request was coming from the President of the United States.[32] So finally, superman Hoover descended from the blue skies, to the rescue of his troubled friend. Hoover told the press that the president had given him an order to fully investigate the Jenkins affair and, after having thoroughly done so, he found that "there was no information that Mr. Jenkins had ever engaged in improper acts with anyone."[33] In addition, Hoover had sent a reassuring message with flowers to Jenkins. In a follow-up, the White House issued a statement saying that poor "Jenkins had been overworked, was suffering from extreme fatigue, had eaten nothing and had had a couple of martinis before he was arrested in a YMCA washroom."[34] But Johnson was still badly shaken from the incident when he appeared campaigning in San Diego. When a reporter asked him to comment on the Jenkins affair he replied angrily that President Eisenhower's administration had had "the same type of problem" with one of its aides. Eisenhower could not recall any such problem and indeed there was none.[35]

Most people are aware that Hoover had lived and died a bachelor. Not only had he never married but he was rarely seen in the company of women. His one and only lifetime friend had been Clyde Tolson, his assistant director, with whom he had always "wined and dined." They had always gone vacationing together to such places as Florida and California. Tolson had also remained a bachelor until his death in 1975. During their long association in the FBI, "allegations were occasionally made either directly or by innuendo, . . . that an 'unnatural' relationship existed between them."[36] When Hoover finally died in 1972, "they presented the flag which had draped his coffin to Mr. Tolson, who also inherited most of the Director's worldly goods."[37]

Joseph L. Schott, a former agent, who had spent more than

twenty years with the FBI, describes in interesting detail a visit by Hoover and Tolson to Texas, Johnson's home state, in the fall of 1959 in a bizarre attempt to strengthen the Senator's pre-election campaign overtures. In his book, "No Left Turns", Schott writes that "... The director must have been pawing through the seeds of time—trying to decide which grains would grow and which would not. The seeds were presidential aspirants. As a result of pawing, he decided that destiny called him to Texas for a visit. The particular Lone Star seed which excited his interest was Lyndon B. Johnson ...[38] The director and Mr. Tolson would arrive November 8 at Love Field, Dallas,* early in the afternoon ... and would immediately depart by car for Austin, where they would spend the night in the Stephen F. Austin Hotel. On the following morning they would be greeted by Senator Lyndon Johnson. At noon the director would make the principal address at [a] luncheon of the United Fund." The agent who drove the party to Austin had been warned in advance that under no circumstance would he make a left turn because in "California several months before, the director's chauffeur-driven car, while making a left turn, had been struck by another car from behind. The director had been shaken up. He had been sitting on the left side behind the driver. Now he refused to sit on the left seat anymore and had forbidden all left turns on auto trips ... [and] he makes Mr. Tolson sit behind the driver ... [which] he calls the 'death seat' ... [or] they could both sit on the right side if one would sit in the other's lap." And so "The next day ... Senator Johnson would appear at the hotel ... pick up the director, and take him for a brief tour of the city ... Shortly after 10 a.m. Senator Johnson arrived ... charging into the lobby leading a pack of half a dozen young men who seemed to be his retainers. The senator was tall, ... with wide hips and waving arms. He was wearing a grey suit and a greenish sport shirt buttoned at the collar without a necktie. He was hatless and wore cowboy boots. He seemed to know every

*Ironically, it was the same airport where John Kennedy had arrived four years later to meet his fatal rendez-vous.

hanger-on in the lobby and greeted them all, bounding about head bobbing and arms shooting out in all directions, shaking hands with two people at a time and embracing others. When he was not squeezing hands and hugging shoulders, he was displaying a small card to everyone . . . to exhibit medical evidence of complete recovery [from a heart attack] and the physical capability to serve his country in the highest office in the land. After completing a circuit of the lobby the senator and his party crowded into an elevator and disappeared upward. They soon spilled out again into the lobby accompanied by the director and Mr. Tolson. Senator Johnson personally escorted the director. Much the taller of the two, he had his arms wrapped around the director's neck as though putting a headlock on him and dragged him through the lobby to the sidewalk outside, where a crowd had begun to gather to see what all the excitement was about. Senator Johnson pulled the director this way and that, introducing him to everyone in sight, without for a second releasing his hold on his guest's neck. 'Come over heah boys! I want you all to meet J. Edgar Hoover, America's Number One G-Man.' . . . The senator was leading his guests on a helter-skelter tour of Austin reminiscent of his lunging, arm-waving, hand-shaking tour of the hotel lobby . . . Back at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel . . . Senator Johnson, still hugging the director around the neck, led the herd across the lobby to the elevator . . . LBJ kept hugging the director's neck and telling him what they were going to do after luncheon, and the Director kept saying, 'No Lyndon, no Lyndon, no Lyndon' but Lyndon never stopped talking for a single second . . . In the luncheon speech Mr. Hoover told his listeners that the time had come to stop 'coddling' young hoodlums . . . who committed serious crimes. He also warned that the Communist Party remained 'an integral part of a treacherous international conspiracy against God and freedom directed from Moscow.' He lauded Senator Johnson as 'an outstanding public servant and one of the most able lawmakers in the nation's history.' "[39]

There is a striking resemblance between Johnson and Hoover in the sense that they both were very shrewd and cunning; they were

indeed a couple of "master con" men who had managed to connive, deceive, conspire, and then escape unnoticed into the shadows of impunity, only to go down in history as honorable men who deserved the highest gratitude. There is also a great similarity in their personalities. They were both very domineering and always in command. They both loved praise and "ass kissing" while being totally intolerant to criticism. And finally they were both uneducated and uncultured. According to Sullivan, Hoover "was very conscious of the fact that he was not educated. He never read anything except the memos and investigative reports that passed over his desk. He had no interest in any kind of culture. He was not interested in plays, not interested in poetry, history or biography."[40] And Johnson, in one of his bitter and envious moods, bragged about his "ancestors" who "were teachers and lawyers and college presidents and governors when the Kennedys in this country were still tending bar."[41] Johnson was described by Paul Healy in the Saturday Evening Post as "entirely preoccupied with the science of politics. He refused to be trapped into thinking about or discussing sports, literature, the stage, the movies, or anything else in the world of recreation."[42] According to Healy, Johnson had no time in his life for books or any other leisure because politics were his only pastime. Johnson would often brag about his "mother's literary interest," or his "wife's ability to enjoy novels" and at the same time refer with real envy, to "all those Ivy Leaguers," (the Kennedys) who "didn't understand a damned thing about the government."[43]

After the 1964 election was over and Johnson won a landslide victory, he was asked by a reporter why he had kept Hoover on, and his response was that "I'd rather have him inside the tent pissing out, than outside pissing in."[44]

* * *

John Kennedy had made two fatal mistakes that were directly responsible for his eventual elimination. The first fatal mistake was his choice of Lyndon Johnson to be his vice-president. The second

was his decision to appoint his brother to be the attorney general of the United States. Bobby's appointment to be Hoover's superior had alienated and antagonized the fearless old man to the point where it became inevitable for him to take the most unprecedented action in this nation's history, the elimination of the President of the United States. Hoover did not despise John Kennedy any less than he did his younger brother. For Hoover was certain that Bobby's relentless and tenacious interference with the Bureau's internal as well as external affairs could not have been done without his brother's approval and blessing. And Hoover was also certain that after 1964 and Kennedy's reelection, he would be kicked out of the Bureau once and for all. But by eliminating the President he would have achieved two hits with one stone; the attorney general would automatically become incapacitated and Hoover's dignity would be restored as he would become once again the undisputed, life-long tyrant of the Bureau.

Hoover and Johnson had been loyal friends for a good many years prior to 1960. But their friendship had all of a sudden intensified in the face of a common enemy and a common threat to their livelihood. Johnson, whose only dream in life was to be president, had suddenly found himself only one step away from achieving that dream. And now that he had come closer to fulfilling that dream than he had ever been in the past, he was certain that he too would be dumped after the 1964 election. While he had fought desperately to become president in 1960, his failure in winning his Party's nomination—in spite of his powerful position as Majority Leader—coupled with the humiliating manner by which he had been treated as a vice-president, had all but brought into focus the absolute necessity for his final solution. And one day in early 1963, Vice-President Johnson entrusted his old time and loyal friend to put his knowledge and experience to work for both of them.

Until Bobby came into the picture, Hoover had enjoyed unrivaled and unequalled dominance over the FBI. But the arrival on the scene of a young, spoiled and boyish attorney general checking the Bureau's "unchecked power," intervening with it's director's "arrogant independence," and examining his unexamined supremacy, had

for the first time shaken the otherwise unshakable super "G Man." For Robert Kennedy was a different and new breed of attorney general to whom Hoover and his Bureau were not previously accustomed. He was determined to exercise his legitimate right of ascendancy over the old man despite his youth and inexperience. And in so doing he had neglected, either intentionally or due to lack of diplomacy, the director's age, prestige, and above all, his fragile and over-sensitive ego. What man in Hoover's untouchable position would not have deeply but silently resented such an audacious challenge and provocation? And what intimidating and provocative "child" attorney general could possibly escape the severe punishment of the irascible Hoover?

Numerous reports confirm that Robert Kennedy was quite serious in dismantling the myth that had surrounded Hoover's "big man" image in the casual and often disrespectful manner in which the young attorney general had treated him. It was evident from Bobby's attitude and sarcasm that he wanted to demonstrate, beyond any doubt, that it was he and not the director, who had the authority over the FBI. On many occasions he would enter the director's office unannounced, in shirtsleeves and would sit on the director's desk in a clear violation to the respect and reverence to what Hoover had been accustomed. No attorney general before had ever dared to treat the director in such a casual and careless manner. But Bobby had thought nothing irregular or unusual of such informalities since he was unquestionably the "boss," and above all, the brother of the president.

It was reported that Bobby had caught the director once taking a nap and scolded him harshly.[45] He had even gone a step further when he ordered a direct line be installed to Hoover's office. This was done without Hoover's consent. As Ken O'Donnell recalls, "two members of the telephone company . . . came into [Hoover's] office, which is the inner sanctum where nobody gets in, and they put a phone in just like that. And Hoover said, 'What's that?' and they said, 'The attorney general would like a direct line to you.' and he said, 'Who authorized it?' and they said, 'The attorney general.' . . .

In the old days he might call Eisenhower, he might call Roosevelt—but who does he call now?"[46] William Hundley, who worked for Internal Security in the Justice Department, had been present one day when Bobby summoned Hoover to his office, as he often did, to demonstrate to everyone, as well as to Hoover himself, who was actually running the show. ". . . he hit . . . a buzzer and within sixty seconds the old man came in with a red face, and he and Bobby jawed at each other for about ten minutes. And Hoover kept looking at me. And [then] he went out, and it was amazing . . ."[47]

But Hundley believes that the climax of hatred did not come about until Bobby had made it clear to many people, that Hoover would be dumped in 1964. " 'Look just wait' Bobby said, '[we are] going to retire him after Jack gets reelected.' "[48]

Although Hoover was supposed to retire much earlier—in 1960—when John Kennedy first became President, Kennedy's "first presidential act" was the reappointment of Hoover in what Tom Wicker calls the "cold, political knowledge that firing the director would have been too unpopular a move for a youthful new president to undertake."[49] And of course it came as no surprise when the grateful Lyndon Johnson later "saw to it that the director did not have to retire at the statutory age limit of seventy . . ."[50]

Joseph L. Schott describes in his usual humorous way the "courtesy call" that Hoover and Tolson had paid Bobby Kennedy soon after he became attorney general. Writes Schott, ". . . They found him sitting behind his desk with his coat off throwing darts at a target across the room . . . [and] did not give the director his undivided attention. The director said he had served under a score of attorneys general during his time in government and it was the most damnably undignified conduct he ever witnessed. He was especially disturbed because Bobby frequently missed the target and the dart stuck in the wall panelling . . . The director said 'It was pure desecration . . . of government property. The problem was [that he] was [a child] and the child could not be disciplined. He happened to be the attorney general of the United States and his brother was president.' The director said that he and Mr. Tolson cut their visit as short as possible and both agreed that it was the most deplorably

undignified conduct they had ever witnessed on a part of a cabinet member." [51]

Hoover fullfilled Johnson's dream, but he also secured his own future.

Schott recalls that shortly after President Kennedy had been murdered in Dallas, the direct telephone to Hoover's office had rung several times, but Hoover neglected to answer it. Hoover, who had been sitting with Johnson at the time, having a toast of victory not only refused to answer the telephone, but ordered it removed. Writes Schott, "I don't think that he ever spoke to Bobby after that."[52]

Although Bobby had remained attorney general after his brother's death, "the game was all over" and Hoover went directly to Johnson. Johnson's love for Bobby was by no means any greater than that of Hoover's. He too despised the "little son of a bitch." Had he removed Bobby immediately after his brother was murdered, people would have been very suspicious, and Johnson was no fool to commit such an error. Besides, what harm could Bobby possibly do now? Bobby too, must have realized that the chair had been pulled from under him and now he was left standing helpless in the hands of his merciless enemies.

CHAPTER II

KENNEDY'S FATAL MISTAKE

"... and beware of the evil of those upon whom you have endowed." Koran

A man's position in public life, irrespective of its importance and repute, does not change his true character or personality as a man and as a human being, with all the faults and weaknesses of being human. A senator who becomes president, irrespective of all the eminence and grandeur of the office of the presidency, remains virtually and basically the same senator with all the imperfection of a senator, who was once an ordinary citizen. Our dilemma has always been, perhaps until recently, the inducement to regard presidents as untouchable superhumans, incapable of possessing unsound qualities. For we have always placed them on high pedestals and worshipped them next to God. We have refused to acknowledge their humanity, much less their capabilities to commit horrors and deceit. Those capabilities have remained not only overlooked, but for the most part unchallenged.

But little by little we are beginning to comprehend that those who govern us, presidents included, are no different from us, the governed. We are also beginning to comprehend that those who choose politics as a profession, do so not because they are patriots, but because their choice is self-gratifying and ego satisfying. A man who desires wholeheartedly to become president, does so not out of deep concern for his country, but out of his own burning passion for self-glorification and fulfillment. Like a mountaineer who endures the greatest hazards in his conquest of the highest summit—he too is motivated not so much by heroism, but by an irresistible impulse to prove to himself and the world his own competence and merit.

Indeed, there is nothing admirable about the character of those who go to extreme pain to prove how admirable they are. Nor are we obligated to distinguish them, despite their achievements, as a cult that is pure and perfect.

Much of history's human sufferings and calamities were caused not by the nations of this world and its peoples, but by the leaders of those nations. How many armies have been sent to battle only to be annihilated by other armies in the name of freedom and patriotism? Had not Napoleon and Hitler cried battle in the name of illusionary and fabricated injustices that were in reality nothing more than daydreams of madmen? Had not Lyndon Johnson promised in 1964 to bring "our boys home" from the jungles of Vietnam, only to turn around in 1965 and escalate the war until the number of those "boys" had reached half a million? And have we not been told repeatedly that those "boys," coming home in wooden boxes by the hundreds every week, have died for a worthy cause, only to find out much later—in 1975—that they had indeed died in vain, and that the worthy cause had been nothing more than an outlet to deep personal frustrations of a genocidal maniac?

It is no wonder that the people in this country have become so disenchanted and politically alienated, that their attitude about their government could be best summarized in James Deakin's description of "an esoteric game played by an exclusive group of insiders, usually for their own benefit. It is a sordid affair that will corrupt honest men if they venture into it, [and] it is a bunch of sleazy politicians on the take, or a faceless bureaucracy riddled with . . . unprincipled opportunists whose word is not to be trusted."[1] This is what has come to be known as "political alienation." It is reflected in the small percentage of voters who go to the polls each election year. It is reflected in the disdain that many of our ablest and most intelligent citizens feel about politics and politicians. It is reflected in voters when they voice the gravest doubts about most presidential candidates, and that by voting, they are merely choosing the less worse from the worst. It is reflected in a recent Gallup Poll which revealed that most Americans believe that the misuse of public funds

luncheon with Newsweek editors lasted more than three hours, and his session with ABC executives was preceded by a prelunch swim—in the nude—in the White House Pool. He paid personal visits to Walter Lippman and the New York Times editors in Manhattan, as if he were dealing with heads of state. While resting at his ranch in Texas on Christmas, he sent an airplane to Dallas to pick up the Times columist James Reston . . . to bring [him] down for a visit. He sent gifts to scores of Washington correspondents, delivered by White House limousines. There [was] . . . an endless stream of statements and telephone calls to . . . writers and broadcasters . . ."[14]

Consequently, newsmen were becoming increasingly suspicious of Johnson's motives, and as Harwood asked: "Was he promoting the national interest or self-interest?" And was he aware, at a time of deep mourning and a busy transitional period, that priority should be given to the nation's domestic and foreign affairs, instead of "bribing" the press to boost his image and ego? And wasn't his unusual courtship to the press a subtle way to remove any suspicion that reporters might have had regarding his predecessor's unusual murder? It would seem that it was. Judging his behavior following the assassination, it was obvious that he felt no shame. His efforts to conceal not only his crime, but also his joy, were unsuccessful. He tried very hard to be a good actor, and not so good an actor he was. A few days after Kennedy's murder, he told the nation that, "Everything I have, I would gladly give, not to be standing here today."[15] But the absolute truth is that Lyndon Johnson would have gladly given anything and everything to be standing there that day. Let there be no mistake about it.

* * *

Most people have goals and ambitions in life, and goals may vary according to how ambitious they are. But whatever their goals and ambitions may be, having a goal in life is what makes life worth living. Nevertheless, the price many a man must pay to achieve that goal can be very costly at times. For the higher the goal, the higher

the price. John Kennedy was indeed one of those ambitious men whose goal in life was to become president. The price he paid was his life. Johnson, on the other hand, had no ambition. Instead, he had a drive and determination. He was determined to become president even if it meant walking over someone else's corpse in order for him to get there. And that is precisely what he did. For Johnson was a bad loser. He could never forget his defeat in 1960, nor could he forgive the man who defeated him. He had always felt that the presidency belonged to him, despite his repeated denials. In his dictionary, a denial was an affirmation and vice versa. When he told the press that something was not going to happen, it was automatically assumed that it was. So when he told reporters that there was going to be no announcement in the near future on the supersonic transport plane, "reporters immediately began boning up background information about the project so they would be ready to write their stories. Sure enough, the announcement was made exactly one day after the statement."[16]

The public obtains most of its news information from newsmen, who in turn obtain it from the president and other officials. Whether or not the public is truthfully informed depends on the truthfulness of the source. And whether or not people want to believe such information, they have no way of verifying it, and most of the time they take the easy way out and accept it at face value. It has been known for a fact that, "throughout his career, Johnson had blandly deceived reporters and through them the public, and the deception had extended from small personal matters to large . . . issues."[17] At a press conference on June 17, 1965, Johnson explained to newsmen why he had sent the Marines to the Dominican Republic. He said that "1,500 innocent people were murdered and shot, and their heads cut off, and . . . as we talked to our Ambassador to confirm the horror and tragedy and the unbelievable fact that they were firing on Americans and the American Embassy, he was talking to us from under a desk while bullets were going through his windows, and he had a thousand American men, women and children assembled in the hotel who were pleading with their president for help to preserve

their lives . . ."[18] and on and on. The U.S. Ambassador in Santa Domingo, however, had a very weak memory. When he was contacted by reporters a few days later, he said that he did not remember any bullets coming through his windows, nor was he hiding under his desk. He also said that no one was beheaded and no Americans were harmed.[19]

During the U.S. bombings of North Vietnam, Johnson had more than once denied that there were any civilian casualties, and insisted that the bombings were limited to military targets. We almost believed such statements until photographers were invited by the Hanoi government to eyewitness the atrocities. The pictures they brought back were indescribable. Thousands of civilians, mostly women and children, were savagely mutilated or burned by napalm and other destructive weapons that would have shocked even the most notorious criminals at the Nuremberg trials.

These and other examples would alone fill hundreds of pages. They clearly show how Johnson had "drawn too deeply on the credibility bank. He had cried wolf too often, to the point where many reporters viewed with suspicion almost everything that he or his spokesmen said. This goes beyond a mere spat; it had sunk deep into the fabric. The relationship between the president and the Washington press corps had settled into a pattern of chronic disbelief."[20] It was a clear illustration of a shockingly sad period in our history. It was also comical, nevertheless. The gossipy Washington community exploded in laughter one day when Johnson's loyal assistant, Jack Valenti, made an "effusive speech" describing his boss as a "sensitive and cultivated man, a great visionary who hones in on the nerve edges of the issue, a president who welcomes dissent. I sleep each night a little better, a little more confidently, because Lyndon Johnson is my president."[21]

* * *

The exact time when Johnson began thinking about the presidency is not known. But "the ambition must have come as naturally

to him as his first breath," wrote Evans and Novak, "and with each successive and successful step up the political ladder, it became more insistent, more clamorous, and absorbed more of his attention."[22] As early as the 1952 Democratic convention in Chicago, Johnson had his eye focused on the "National ticket." That was the time when President Truman had decided not to seek another term due to his decline in popularity. But it was Richard Russell who had hoped of filling the political vacuum by making a serious bid for the presidential nomination. Johnson however, made a secret pact with Russell. He would help Russell secure the nomination, and in return, Russell would put him on the ticket for the vice-presidency. But Johnson's early dreams had soon evaporated when Russell lost the nomination to Adlai Stevenson, who chose Sparkman over Johnson as a running mate.[23]

But Johnson's setback proved to be only temporary, as he continued to pursue his goal with more determination. He became a presidential candidate the moment he became the democratic leader in the senate. According to Evans and Novak, "a politician who coveted power, and mastered the techniques for amassing it as Johnson had, could scarcely overcome his desire for the presidency. But the weakness of his credentials for the presidency, as a man of the South and out of the mainstream of national party power, led to presidential schizophrenia in Johnson, an incurable malady that punctuated his uncertain course in presidential politics with sudden stops and starts. At times, his deep-rooted though inarticulated desire for the White House led him to tentative, half-planned starts; then, remembering the burden of his Southern heritage, and further remembering that his shaky political base in conservative Texas might not sustain a bold venture into national politics, he would stop short."[24] All through 1959 and the beginning of 1960, Johnson was undecided on whether to run or not to run. His reluctance did not reflect his desire not to be president. His reluctance was due only to his lack of self-confidence. When he finally mustered enough courage, it was too late. "Thus his strategy for 1960 was reduced to the non-strategy of postponement, delay, procrastination and hope. That

doomed Johnson against fiercely competitive Jack Kennedy, who had taken the hard, determined first step—the mental commitment to run for president no matter the odds or the obstacles . . ."[25]

For Kennedy could have had as much reason to be unsure of himself and the presidency. Being a Catholic in a predominantly Protestant country was certainly a major obstacle. His youth was also an obstacle; for youth is always indicative to lack of wisdom and experience. But what Kennedy instead had, while Johnson did not, was courage. And what Kennedy lacked, while Johnson did not, was opportunism. This explains why Johnson had waited until the last minute to announce his candidacy in the 1960 presidential race. It also explains the hopeless manner by which he accepted the vice presidency as his one and only chance. And finally, it explains the surprise and astonishment which his acceptance had caused among so many, including his closest friends. For he had always considered the vice presidency as a position that was suitable only for the young and the inexperienced. "The vice presidency," he often said, "is a good place for a young man who needs experience."[26]

As a democratic majority leader in the senate, Johnson had enjoyed a tremendous amount of power and prestige, second only to President Eisenhower. It was by far the second most important position in the government. And as a senate leader, he was so forceful that he was, as Jack Bell put it, "able to dominate [senators] despite the resentment they sometimes felt at what they characterized as his highhanded methods."[27] Bobby Baker, who had been a Secretary to Senate Majority, and Johnson's right hand, admits that, as a Secretary, he, "had made powerful enemies on the Hill" because he had been "an instrument in carrying out LBJ's policies—some of which were sometimes high-handed—and natural resentments had accrued." And he added that, "I know that malcontents and partisans who held old grudges against LBJ might be tempted to excise me once they had little or nothing to fear from Lyndon Johnson" after he had left the Senate to become vice president.[28]

Thus, to a man as powerful and domineering as Johnson was, the acceptance of the vice presidency came as a complete surprise to

everyone. The vice presidency, they were certain, would hardly be suitable for his excessive pride and inflated ego. But by taking a closer look at Lyndon, who obviously had other thoughts and plans, it would appear quite in context with his overall foresight and opportunist nature, and not in the least surprising. After his humiliating defeat to win his Party's nomination for the presidency, the vice presidency was like something that had dropped upon him from heaven. It was by all means his one and only hope. It was either resurrection or a definite political death.

Johnson was certain that he would not, and could not, have made the presidency on his own. The fact that he was a Southerner was by no means his only handicap. As Tom Wicker wrote, ". . . [Johnson's] lengthy political career had been clouded by repeated charges of provincialism, servitude to the oil and gas interests of Texas, opportunism and 'wheeling and dealing' in the state's Byzantine politics; by his controversial 'one-man rule' as majority leader in the senate; and by his disputed election to that body in 1948 with a suspiciously achieved majority of eighty-seven votes (a feat that had earned him the newspaper nickmane of Landslide Lyndon)."[29] Despite his powerful position in the senate, Johnson nevertheless had great doubts and "deep insecurity" about his image in the East. His awareness of the fact that the "liberals" and the "intellectuals" were against him, was not without foundation. If they were against him, and most of them were, it was not because he was a Southerner, but because he "had voted Southern for twenty years on civil rights legislation," and because he "had supported the Taft-Hartley Labor Act and had voted to override Truman's veto of it . . ."[30]

Johnson's sphere of power had its commercial rewards. For many years Austin (the capital of Texas) has had only one television station, in spite of its size. And the harsh criticism by senators and congressmen as a result of this commercial monopoly, did very little to change the situation. KTBC-TV was a very profitable television station which was owned, as a matter of record, by Lady Bird and her daughters.[31] Barry Goldwater once remarked that Austin was not hard to recognize from a plane because it was the only city of its size with only one TV tower.[32]

What about Johnson's well known, and well publicized accomplishments in the senate? Such accomplishments, says Wicker, "might have been useful—had they not been achieved by cloakroom manipulations, vote swapping, sacrifices of principle, and other shady machinations."[33] And Harwood believes that what Johnson had achieved as a senate majority leader would "seem less the result of statesmanship than of ruthlessness and the brokerage of power . . ."[34]

At the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, Johnson came prepared for a full scale confrontation with the man from Boston. Johnson knew that the fight was futile but he was not going to give up so easily. The events which followed "did little to enhance his reputation." And when he later claimed that he had "not really sought the Democratic nomination," such a claim was a joke to those who witnessed how hard he had run. In a television interview in 1963, Johnson said that "my friends put me in the race in 1960. They felt that they should have representation and my name should go before the convention."[35] And he told another reporter that the reason he had lost the nomination was due to his "post of duty and of responsibility here in Washington as the Majority Leader . . . because of that duty, a duty to all the people, I cannot be absent when there is a public business at stake . . ." and added bitterly that "Jack was out kissing babies when I was passing bills."[36] But Johnson was not in Washington "passing bills" since he was simultaneously running to retain his Texas Senate seat as well as to win the presidential nomination; a fact that, according to Wicker "seemed to confirm his reputation as a trickster and an opportunist."[37] Earlier in his career, Johnson's close relationship with President Roosevelt was another example of political opportunism and "sagacity." Through his support of Roosevelt, Johnson was able to win national attention and recognition. The "young congressman made the most of his access to [the] Roosevelt entourage." Through him "he established close relationships with powerful men . . . [such as] Abe Fortas and William O. Douglas." And through him, he made the acquaintances of "dominant figures in Congress, including Sam Rayburn and Carl Vinson."[38]

In Los Angeles, all was not well. The Johnson and Kennedy camps exchanged hostilities and resentment throughout the entire convention. But Johnson's deep resentment for John Kennedy had its roots earlier in the senate where he regarded the young and stylish senator as another kid "for whom politics were no more than a rich boy's avocation." But in the "arena of national politics, before the television cameras and on the stump in Wisconsin or West Virginia or California, the roles were reversed. Kennedy was the success, the charismatic, stylish sophisticate, Johnson the bumbling claghorn."[39] But it was in Los Angeles that Johnson's dislike for Kennedy had intensified enormously. And it was in Los Angeles that "the truth of this difference was ground into Johnson's consciousness so deeply that he could never thereafter root it out."[40] And finally, it was in Los Angeles that the "ultimate humiliation" occurred only two days before Kennedy's inevitable and predictable nomination. In the comfortable company of his Texas delegation, Johnson insisted on a debate with "Young Jack" hoping that he could outshout him, and therefore leave a good impression on everyone. It was exactly the opposite from what he had anticipated, and "Kennedy won the debate hands down."[41]

During the campaign, Johnson's sharp tongue was vehemently unleashed in a bitter attack on Kennedy, using every possible slander to demean the young senator. This vicious attack contrasted sharply with Kennedy's graciousness and well-meaning attitude toward his attacker. He sat quietly listening to Johnson's vulgar bombardments and abuses, and as he finished, Kennedy rose to say that he was "full of admiration of Senator Johnson, full of affection for him [and] strongly in support for him—for majority leader."[42] But Johnson did not think it was funny, and sat completely deflated by the young Senator's witty remarks.

Johnson did not think a Catholic could win or should win. He touched on that sensitive issue with a barrage of sarcasm when he told delegates, ". . . we Protestants . . . proved that we'll vote for a Catholic" and added that he would like to see Catholics vote for a Protestant. Kennedy mused by saying that his religion did not stop him from serving as a lieutenant in the Navy during World War II.

Nor was it an obstacle for him in becoming a senator. He saw no reason, therefore, why it should be an obstacle to the White House.[43]

Dressed in TV blues and surrounded by "his boys from the cattle country," Johnson continued his vicious attacks unmercifully. He "repeatedly drew attention to Kennedy's voting record and senate absenteeism." He accused "some senators" of having been absent from the senate, missing as many as 34 roll calls because of "their" ill health, while he answered every one of them. "There were 45 roll calls on civil rights in recent months. I know senators who missed as many as 34 of those roll calls," he shouted. Kennedy, on the other hand, saw no reason to be on the defensive, and kept his "boyish" smile all along, the more to Johnson's irritation. He calmly countered by saying that since the "senator wasn't specific in his remarks about voting on civil rights legislation, so I presume he was talking about some other candidate."[44]

Despite Johnson's well known history of heart trouble, the Kennedys never attempted to use it against him. The Johnsonians, however, in their desperation, tried to smear Kennedy by bringing up his back illness (which was not nearly as serious as a massive heart attack), and by alleging that he was secretly suffering from Addison disease,* and consequently, he was not healthy enough either to serve or survive as President. John Connally, who would rather fight than switch,** was in charge of the Citizens-for-Johnson during the campaign. In a desperate maneuver, Connally called in the press and charged that Senator Kennedy was dying from Addison disease, and that he would like to see the senator carefully examined by Johnson's own physician (who happened to be a heart specialist).[45]

And India Edwards, Johnson's top adviser on campaign strategies, observed that Kennedy was the only man "offering himself for president who has been absent eight months in one year because of

*A tubercular destruction of the adrenal gland.

**He later switched to Republican.

illness." This was a reference to Kennedy's illness in 1954 when he underwent surgery to correct a spinal disc condition.[46]

Finally, when all had failed to damage Kennedy's image, they tried to revive the old charge that Kennedy's father was anti-semitic and a Hitler sympathizer in the late 1930's. And when Johnson cried that he "never thought Hitler was right," he was only gasping his last breath before he conceded defeat.

Unlike his brother Jack, Bobby Kennedy had little tolerance for Johnson's low and petty style. He responded violently by saying that "these are desperation tactics employed by those who are trying unsuccessfully to stop my brother's nomination. These charges show how really desperate they are."[47] And desperate Johnson really was. In his last speech, he shouted with a hoarse voice, "I would presume to tell my fellow democrats that I am not the only man they should consider for this job, or to demand that any delegation vote for me. I am not going to go elbowing through 179 million Americans pushing aside other senators and governors and congressmen to shout 'look at me, and nobody else!' I only want my fellow Democrats and fellow Americans to look long, to look hard, and to look wisely to find the right man."[48] But to his dismay, Johnson's "fellow democrats" took his advice and chose John Kennedy. Johnson's reversed psychology had proven to be inept and phony.

The liberals, the labor leaders and the big city bosses of the Democratic Party were all against Johnson's nomination to the Democratic presidency in 1960. It is no wonder that his selection to the vice presidency had nearly caused a party split. Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and the New York Liberal Party continued to fight Johnson's selection for the vice presidency. Joseph L. Rauch, ADA vice president, denounced Kennedy's choice of the Texan as a "betrayal," and said that it had made a "mockery of the Democratic party's profession of liberalism."[49]

Johnson's grief and humiliation had thus signaled the beginning of a long and calculated plan. But had it not been for Kennedy's fateful move to choose him as his running mate, such a plan would have certainly lacked a compelling motive, and Kennedy's life might have

been spared. Had Kennedy been wiser in his choice, history would have been written differently. But history is fate and it has its peculiar way of how it should be written. How could it be that such an unexpected stroke of luck for one man, became a disaster for another? Even though the heir was only one step away from the throne, only when the King dies does he inherit the Kingdom. But what if the King is too young to die? The heir would then resort to other means, depending of course on how badly he wants the throne. For the impatient heir may find himself faced with the only alternative of having to resort to the law of the jungle—to kill in order to survive.

There is a sufficient amount of uncertainty regarding the reasons behind the selection of Johnson for the vice presidency. Obviously, it was neither Johnson's personality nor his qualifications that had influenced Kennedy's decision. And it is rather doubtful that his selection was for the sole purpose of carrying Texas and the South. Many historians, however, are inclined to agree that his selection was an attempt to revive the Roosevelt-Garner "old coalition between northern city machines and southern traditionalists which had kept the Democratic party in power for so long." [50] It is also doubtful that Kennedy had anticipated winning the election while running under a liberal standard in the North and a conservative one in the South, a fact that would have alienated the liberals in general and the blacks in particular. For the addition of a Southerner to the ticket would sabotage all of Kennedy's careful efforts to convince the blacks in particular. For the addition of a Southerner to the ticket James Wechsler observed in the New York Post, ". . . the liberals . . . who had prematurely committed themselves to Kennedy . . . the news was a special blow; just one day after his nomination, Kennedy had seemingly turned his back on them in reaching his first fateful conclusion."[51]

But it is not without merit the rumor which had circulated for some time, even after Johnson's selection, that it was Stuart Symington of Missouri whom Kennedy really had in mind as his running mate. Nor is it unreasonable to assume that Kennedy had made the

offer to Johnson in anticipation that he would flatly reject it. Is it then reasonable to conclude that the only reason the offer was made was to appease Johnson's bitterness for losing the nomination?

Hardly anyone among the Kennedy men had entertained the remote possibility that Johnson would be chosen as vice president. And hardly anyone ever thought that, if chosen, he would gladly settle for a number two man position. As O'Donnell wrote, ". . . none of us ever thought that Jack Kennedy would pick Johnson, whom he regarded as a conservative . . ., opposed to the moderate liberalism of Kennedy," and he added that, "the labor people had warned me repeatedly that they did not want Johnson on the Kennedy ticket . . . I was assuming that Kennedy would probably end up selecting Symington, who was acceptable to both the labor leaders and the Southerners, but I did not really care whom he picked as long as it wasn't Johnson."[52] But O'Donnell was not the only one who had been disappointed over Kennedy's big blunder. He continued, ". . . about a half hour after Jack had broken the news to Bobby, Pierre Salinger asked me to come to Bobby's bedroom in the Biltmore. I found Pierre looking glum. He nodded his head toward the bathroom, where Bobby was soaking himself in the tub, tired after the long night before . . . I said to Bobby, 'Don't tell me it's Johnson.'

'I guess it is,' Bobby said. I was so furious that I could hardly talk." O'Donnell then insisted on seeing Kennedy immediately hoping that he could persuade him to change his mind. With Bobby going along, they both went to see him in "the Kennedy suite upstairs," which was filled with a "throng" of angry Democrats. "When Jack saw the expression on my face, he beckoned to Bobby and me to follow him into the bedroom. The bedroom was crowded with people, too, and realizing that I was about to explode, . . . we went into the bathroom and closed the door behind us. 'This is the worst mistake you ever made,' I said to him. 'You came out here to this convention like a knight on a white charger, the clean-cut young Ivy League college guy who's promising to get rid of the old hack machine politicians. And now, in your first move after you get the

nomination, you go against all the people who supported you. Are we going to spend the campaign apologizing for Lyndon Johnson and trying to explain why he voted against everything you ever stood for?'

'Wait a minute,' he said. 'I've offered it to him, but he hasn't accepted it yet and maybe he won't. If he does accept it, let's get one thing clear. I'm forty-three years old . . . I'm not going to die in office. So the vice presidency doesn't mean anything. I'm thinking of something else, the leadership in the senate. If we win, it will be by a small margin and I won't be able to live with Lyndon Johnson as the leader of a small majority in the senate. Did it occur to you that if Lyndon becomes the vice president, I'll have Mike Mansfield as the leader in the senate, somebody I can trust and depend on?' "[53]

Kennedy might have been too young to die of illness, but he wasn't too young to be murdered. What he did not suspect was that his youth was indeed the more reason for him to be killed in office. What he did not know was that his young age was in fact a liability and not an asset. And what he did not know was that, because of his young age, and not in spite of it, he should have been more cautious whom he selected to be his vice president. Had he been wise and cautious he would not have chosen a much older man who had suffered a massive heart attack, and who did not have all the time in the world to wait to fulfill his one and only dream.

Kennedy's longevity and the unlikelihood of dying in office was by no means the only barrier which separated Johnson from his presidential dreams. For Lyndon Johnson, there was more than one Kennedy for him to cope with. There was, without question, the ambitious and energetic Bobby, who too had presidential aspirations. Those aspirations, even if remained hidden at that early stage, were sure to surface as the year 1968 came nearer. It would seem that the presidency had been inherited by the family from Massachusetts, and the White House had become its permanent home. To Johnson, the thought of competing again in 1968 against another Kennedy must have seemed a dreadful illusion. If the year 1960 was a humiliating

experience and a nightmare, the year 1968 was not going to be any less humiliating. In fact, it would have been much harder to beat Bobby in 1968 than it was Jack in 1960. By 1968 the Kennedys would have had earned their place in history, and their name would have become a household word.

It was rather hopeless for the big man from Johnson City.

Johnson's loyal aide Jack Velenti said once that while his boss was vice president he "was convinced he would never become president in his own right. Indeed, he was convinced that no Southerner in his lifetime would be elected president. Southerners, in Lyndon's mind, were hyphenated Americans, second-class citizens."[54]

Kennedy's fatal offer was made and voracious Lyndon grabbed it with his arms at full length. But the foundation of Lyndon's joy was a little shaky as a result of the agonizing labor leaders who threatened to "put up a vice presidential candidate of their own . . . with a wild floor fight which would split the Democratic party."[55] It was suggested at this point, and in order to avoid a floor fight, that an attempt be made to persuade Johnson to "pull out." Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams of Michigan threatened that if Johnson was nominated, "he would personally lead a floor fight against the nomination."[56] Faced with that problem, Kennedy dispatched his younger brother to meet with Johnson to explain to him the dilemma and see if he could be persuaded to withdraw "for the sake of the party."

Bobby, who had developed a great dislike for Johnson during the campaign because of the latter's vicious attacks against his brother, was more than anxious to get the assignment. But the only way Bobby's mission could have met with any success, would have been Johnson's withdrawal at gun point. It was very naive of the Kennedy brothers to even assume that Johnson would give up his prize. Johnson had finally seen the light at the end of a long and dark tunnel, and there was no way to make him turn back. By accepting the vice presidency, Johnson had brought himself within one step away from the dream of his life, and it was up to him now to transform that dream into reality. As Jack Bell wrote in the Johnson

Treatment, "John Kennedy and two terms seemed then to stand between him and the presidency, but Johnson's eyes were on it. The long highway ahead was full of hazards but the man was full of determination."[57]

And so, Lyndon Johnson resigned himself to the uncomfortable and powerless role of the vice presidency. It was hardly a role suitable for his domineering personality which he had so conspicuously demonstrated as a senate majority leader. It was odd that a man like him would settle for the role of Jeeves, the butler, ready and willing to subordinate to the whims of his lordship, the master. But Johnson, to be sure, was not unaware of the humiliation which awaited him as vice president. He was not unaware that he would be a Southerner among a North-Eastern crowd from Boston and New York. That Ivy League, cultured crowd was not the kind of crowd with which he would feel at home. He was not unaware of all the difficulties which were ahead of him. And finally, he was not unaware that he would have to close one eye, turn a deaf ear, and swallow his pride if he were to achieve his goal. For it was a small price to pay for the glorious days which lay ahead, the days when everyone would call him Mr. President. For this, there was no price, and no substitute.

Johnson's behavior as vice president provoked many jokes and amusement, much to his displeasure. He always stood in the background whenever he appeared with Kennedy, a sight which delighted his former senate associates to whom he had always been "Mr. Tyrant." At cocktail parties, he was the main topic for gossip. People would ask one another laughingly, "Whatever happened to Lyndon?" [58] And there was the story about Johnson, Kennedy and Dean Rusk "being trapped in a boat drifting out to sea. Swamped with water, it could only support one man. Rusk wanted to negotiate a solution; Kennedy began seeking delegate support; Johnson took a roll call vote to see who would remain in the boat while the others jumped overboard—and it came out three to zero in his favor."[59]

Johnson was aware of those jokes and all he could do was complain bitterly to close friends and intimates. He told some friends

He always stood in the background whenever he appeared with Kennedy.

He had to swallow his pride if he was to achieve his goal

in 1962 that "the vice president is only as big a man as the president will let him be." He was hardly the big man he always wanted to be. Instead, Johnson was forced to remain on the sidelines and in almost total obscurity from the main channels of the Kennedy Administration. His views and mannerism were shaped neither academically, nor in compatibility with the young president and his men. He was considered an outsider and an outcast among the liberal intellectuals who surrounded Kennedy in the early 1960's. He was a decade older than most of those intellectuals, and therefore, he was something of a "throw back" from another time. And because he was not a product of the Ivy League and the sophisticated Eastern Establishment, the relationship which existed between him and those men was one of a strained and superficial nature. He was not only ignored and treated with much indifference, but he had the feeling of being rejected by the "Eastern snobism." And after many years in the headlines as a senate leader, his name had all but disappeared from the newspapers under the obscure shadows and anonymity of the vice presidency.

Harwood wrote that "the vice presidency was a painful episode in Lyndon's life, an episode we still know little about."[60] And in his memoirs about his brother, Sam Houston Johnson described how hostile the Kennedys were to Lyndon, ". . . they made his stay in the vice presidency the most miserable three years of his life. He wasn't the number two man in the administration; he was the lowest man on the totem pole . . . I know him well enough to know he felt humiliated time and time again, that he was openly snubbed by second-echelon White House staffers who snickered at him behind his back and called him 'uncle cornpone.' "[61]

Bobby Baker was Johnson's protege and right hand for many years. He recalls in Wheeling and Dealing that ". . . LBJ felt offended because he thought the Kennedys excluded and snubbed him socially" and that he "had been grousing and whining behind the president's back . . . Indeed, during this entire vice presidency, LBJ had a glum hang dog air about him. He was almost impossible to cheer up. 'If I speak one word of disagreement with the cabinet and

White House staff looking on,' he said, 'then they'll put it out to Joe Kraft and Sander Vanocur and everybody that I'm a damed traitor. You don't know how they treat me over there . . . I know [Kennedy's] snotnosed brother's after my ass, and all those high-falutin's Harvards, and if I give 'em enough rope they'll hang me with it' . . ."[62] And during a meeting between Kennedy and Baker, the president confided in Baker to find out what was really troubling the vice president. Kennedy said, " 'I know he's suppressing his instinct . . . I really want to know what's on his mind . . . I know he's unhappy in the vice presidency. It's . . . the worst job I can imagine. The duties are so limited under the Constitution and the president must make the day-to-day decisions and set policy—he simply can't delegate much of substance to the vice president.' "[63]

Evans and Novak put it beautifully when they wrote that, "never was there a more difficult union of a man and job than the joining of Lyndon Johnson, the supreme connoisseur of power, with the vice presidency, the place without power."[64] For Johnson being the "Boss" was unquestionably part of his built-in personality trait. That he would settle for a powerless and meaningless job was to him a frustrating ordeal and a nightmare. "Personality," he once said, "is a trait that transforms a man or a woman from a commonplace being into a compelling and attractive figure. It is the difference between the ordinary and the remarkable: Personality is power. It has force and strength, charm and attraction. The man with a striking personality can accomplish greater deeds in life than a man of equal abilities but less personality."[65] And Manuel Sanchez who was a student in one of Johnson's classes in 1930 recalls that his teacher's "personality was very dominating that you felt an obligation to him . . ."[66]

Johnson's shrewdness in judging men, his relentless drive to accomplish his goals, his understanding and ability to use power and patronage, and his utmost success in utilizing humility and persuasion were all major ingredients which explain how he came to dominate the senate as a majority leader. But the true explanation of his success was in his powerful personality which made him, for all his defects, a big man. "His only real power," wrote Harwood, "was

the power of persuasion, and that power rested on his relationship to his peers. It took enormous self-discipline to like or seem to like many of his colleagues, to control his powerful emotions, to keep his large ego in check, and to drain off his grievances."[67]

Most importantly, it took enormous self-discipline to conceal his deep hatred for the Kennedys and, above all, his desire to fulfill his unfulfilled dream to become president. For there was nothing that he had yearned for more badly.

The appointment of Bobby Kennedy as attorney general aroused much discontent among many people. They reasoned that, in view of his age and inexperience, he would never have been chosen had he not been the president's brother. During the Kennedy Administration, Bobby was not only the number two man, but he was also considered to be the "terror of the bureaucracy." Too many people saw him as a "tough cop," a relentless prosecutor, and an "arrogant little man." Columnist Jim Bishop described him as "an irritable and irritating little man, [who was] tactless, impatient, [and] ruthless . . ."[68]

During a meeting in 1962 of a presidential committee against racial discrimination by government contractors, vice president Johnson was presiding while James Webb, a protege of Johnson, was discussing the difficulties of hiring blacks and other minorities in the space program. Bobby arrived late, and after listening for a few minutes, he interrupted the talks "without addressing the chief or referring to Johnson at all. In an arrogant manner, he asked Webb, 'How many employees are you talking about?'

'Forty thousand,' Webb replied.

'How many people do you have working on discrimination problems?'

'One man full-time and one part-time.'

Bobby's face became red with contempt and with a scornful voice he said, 'You mean you have forty thousand employees and you have only one and one-half men working on this and you expect to make progress?' " In front of more than twenty government officials and leading private citizens, Bobby attacked Webb, "using profanity, for

his slack approach to the problem." Then he abruptly left the meeting. The vice president "sat through this performance slumped in his chair with his eyes half closed."[69]

Johnson had little or no experience in the conduct of foreign affairs. His several trips abroad as vice president had been "largely ceremonial" and, due to his "informal and extroverted" behavior, almost completely disastrous. He made headlines when he "whooped out loud in the Taj Mahal or brought a puzzled Pakistani camel driver . . . to the United States on a bizarre visit . . ."[70] A Newsweek story headlined "Yeeaaayho!" described the horrifying yell he let loose inside the Taj Mahal and "other seeming breaches of protocol and local custom" which made him appear like a "country bumpkin."[71] His mannerism and behavior were the source of considerable criticism and complaints. These included among others, his demands for special privileges such as an oversized bed to be brought to his room, and "shower attachments that emitted a hard needle point spray"; his insistence that a special U.S. military airplane be dispatched from Taiwan to Hong Kong and back to bring a case of "Cutty Sark," his favorite Scotch, and his "haggling with shopkeepers everywhere he went."[72]

Evans and Novak describe a Johnson brief stop-over in London. ". . . on Thanksgiving night, the United States Embassy in London received word that the vice president was unexpectedly dropping in on the British Isles on his way back home. Johnson arrived the next afternoon in a large Air Force plane, which drew up at the VIP gate at London Airport in pouring rain. A United States sergeant emerged, ran over where Minister Walworth Barbour waited and motioned him on the plane. Johnson shook hands with Barbour and asked his invariable first question, carried over from campaign days . . .: How large is the crowd? There was no crowd, replied Barbour, but there were many newspapermen. All right, said Johnson, I'll have a statement but no questions. The British, who had been informed early that morning, were thrown into a maelstrom of activity. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan cancelled a weekend trip to be in London to see the vice president. Following his example, so

did other members of the Conservative government. Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary, invited the cream of British politics to a dinner in Johnson's honor at Home's official residence that evening. The dinner went smoothly, but before ten o'clock Johnson rose from his easy chair, stretched, and announced he was tired—he had a heavy schedule the next day and had to go off to bed. The early departure was a blow to the British officials who had cancelled their weekend plans . . . but perhaps, under the circumstances, it was understandable. What was not understandable were pictures in the newspapers the next day showing Johnson at a snappy Park Lane nightclub late the previous night. Secret Service agents, in their routine report to the embassy the next day, clocked Johnson at four hours in the nightclub. The British government was not amused."[73]

Johnson's eccentric behavior abroad had come not so much as a result of his crude and scurrilous nature, but largely as an escape from the misery and self-pity at home. As if such torture were not enough for him, he had yet to come face to face with another equally foreboding dilemma: he was going to be dumped in 1964. Such a move would have dealt him the final blow out of the ring of politics. It would have shattered all hopes he ever had to become president. Now that he was only one heartbeat away from the presidency, to be dumped was unbearable. He finally saw the writing on the wall. He must take action, immediately, or else he was doomed.

After a Democratic party fund-raising gala in Washington early in 1963, the Johnsons gave a late evening party at their house. Among the absentees were the president and his two brothers. This was interpreted as an indication that Johnson was being fazed out gradually from the 1964 ticket. This incident coincided with the investigation that was getting underway about Bobby Baker's sudden financial gains which was linked directly to Johnson. The Washington Post reported that a lawsuit had been filed against Baker "charging him with using his senate job for financial gains." Johnson was under the impression that Bobby Kennedy was behind the lawsuit. "He suspected that the Justice Department and Bobby Kennedy were

hounding Baker to embarrass [him] and ease him off the ticket in 1964."[74] In addition, a story was circulating among the "Kennedy intimates," and which reached Johnson, that the Kennedys were planning a "dynastic succession with Robert Kennedy* to succeed John Kennedy in 1968."[75]

And so it seemed that the Kennedys had taken over permanently, or at least for many years to come. It also seemed that there was absolutely no hope for Johnson to become president through the peaceful and civilized process of our democratic system, as long as there were Kennedys to compete with, who could easily capture the votes with their looks, style and charisma. Outflanked, rejected, and mistreated, Johnson was ready for a full vengeance, come what may. The patient Johnson finally ran out of patience. And the patient Johnson ran to see Dr. Hoover for consultation, who himself was already in his lab working on a formula to relieve the so-called Kennedy ailment, and render both men and the rest of the country once again to a healthy start.

*Robert Kennedy did run for President in 1968. Whether or not his assassination was part of an overall plot against the Kennedys is beyond the scope of this book.

CHAPTER III

TO KILL, PROTECT, AND DEFEND

"We'll bear the grief of his death until the day of ours."
–Adlai Stevenson

On the morning of November 22, 1963, the bright light of a shining flame was gone forever. Men and women, most of whom had never seen the young president, were weeping openly, unbelieving and afraid. Unbelieving because they thought he was immortal and immune to life's destructive evil and ephemerality. They could not believe that our great nation was capable of such hatred and mendacity. He was one president whom they had genuinely loved and genuinely admired. For that, they were desperately insecure and unsure of the future, wondering what would happen next. And as Tom Wicker put it: "The world, it seemed, was a dark and malignant place; the chill of the unknown shivered across the nation."[1]

The events of that day, and the transition of power to another man were taking place so rapidly that people were either unaware or unwilling to adjust to the new situation. Hardly anyone looked at the new president and hardly anyone thought of him. For the mood of the nation was so angry that a rebellion or even a coup d'etat would have been anything but surprising. The magnitude of the crime was so severe, that the news travelled like shock waves across the nation and the world. The stock market tumbled in panic selling, and all scheduled television and radio programs were cancelled and focused instead on the desolate situation in Dallas.

Much has been said and written about the atrocity and horror at Dealey Plaza on that tragic day. Yet, among all the writers, William Manchester stands out unchallenged. In "Death of a President," he

wrote, "The plaza resembles nothing so much as a field which has just been swept by a mighty wind. [A bystander] has thrown his son to the ground and is shielding him with his body . . . [an] officer . . . rams the north curb with his motorcycle, overturns, leaves the wheels spinning, and scrambles up . . . pistol in hand. [An amateur photographer] screeches over and over, 'They killed him! They killed him . . .' [An] agent . . . raises the barrel of the AR-15 and points it about aimlessly . . . The Lincoln continues to slow down. Its interior is a place of horror. The last bullet has torn through John Kennedy's cerebellum, the lower part of his brain. Leaning toward her husband, Jacqueline Kennedy has seen a serrated piece of his skull—flesh-colored . . . detach itself. At first there is no blood. And then . . . there is nothing but blood . . . Gobs of blood as thick as a man's hand are soaking the floor of the back seat, the president's clothes are steeped in it . . . [his] body is lurching soundlessly toward his wife . . . Nellie [Connally] wonders if she is being sprayed by spent buckshot; but John Connally knows . . . and as he slides bleeding into Nellie's lap he fills his lungs and screams again and screams again . . . in agony; in terror she begins to scream too; [all] . . . saturated in Kennedy's blood . . . and Jackie springs up on her stained knees, facing toward the sidewalk crying out, 'My God, what are they doing? My God, they've killed Jack, they've killed my husband, Jack, Jack!' "

". . . The sky is again the same faultless blue. Everything beyond the immediate scene looks as it did. Dallas, the country, and the world have not had time to respond. But they are not the same, they can never be; the thirty-fifth president of the United States has been assassinated; John Kennedy is gone, and all he could do for his country is history."[2]

During the frantic, short race to the hospital, "certain patterns of behavior began to emerge which were to endure . . . incredulity, outrage, grief . . . no one could credit the tragedy to a single assassin . . . The crime seemed too vast to be attributed to a single criminal. Ford's Theater was remembered as the building in which one man shot Lincoln but Dallas became the city where 'they' killed Kennedy."[3]

As the presidential car reached the emergency entrance of Parkland Hospital with screeching brakes, everyone ran to see whether the president was still alive. They found him in Jackie's arms with his eyes open, covered with blood. One of his aides, David Powers, thought he was still alive and cried, "oh, my God Mr. President, what did they do?" Jackie, with a terrifying look on her face, looked up and shook her head. "Dave, he's dead,"[4] she said in a faint voice. Many cried in dismay, many prayed, and many hoped for a miracle. As the dead president was being carried from the car by his aides and Secret Service men, Jackie "clung to him and refused to let him be moved."[5] Finally she was persuaded to let go of him momentarily, and she was seen holding his hand and running along beside the stretcher. Although the doctors had found that the president had still a heartbeat, his wife knew better. Her instinct told her that she had just become a widow.

Meanwhile, Johnson who was in another section of the hospital surrounded by Secret Service men, was doing his best to show sadness instead of joy, and sympathy instead of pleasure. For this was the day he had been waiting for all his life. He had made the trip from Texas to Washington so many times in the past. Only this time he would go back as president of the United States. He had finally become the number one man in the nation and the world, with all the prestige and power from which he had been for so long deprived, and for which he was so painfully and desperately yearning. He was like a slave who had just been liberated, and a prisoner who was set free.

And in a few days he would have the audacity to tell the mourning nation in an almost credible humility, "All I have ever possessed I would have gladly given NOT to be here today. For the greatest leader of our time has been struck down by the foulest deed of our time . . ."[6] Johnson was such a good actor, that only he was capable of telling such an outrageous lie. The first sentence would have been more truthful if only he would have left out the word NOT. Indeed, all he had ever possessed he would have gladly given . . . and more, to be standing there that day. Let there be no mistake about it.

"We'll bear the grief of his death until the day of ours."

And once an actor, always an actor. In a later statement to the Warren Commission, Johnson described his sad mood in the hospital and how he was overwhelmed by the "magnitude of our personal loss of this great man and good friend."[7] And that his only outlet for the grief and that of Lady Bird was "our sharp, painful and bitter concern and solicitude for Mrs. Kennedy."[8] And to the poor widow, he said, ". . . I only wish things were different—that I didn't have to be here. But the Almighty has willed differently, and now Lady Bird and I need your help . . ."[9] At the funeral, the unsuspecting widow in black, made a spontaneous remark to the new president, who chose not to comment. "Oh, Lyndon," Mrs. Kennedy said, "what an awful way for you to come in."[10]

* * *

At the emergency room of Parkland Hospital, the staff of surgeons and nurses who had labored so hard to revive the president finally threw in the towel and covered his face with a white sheet. A Catholic priest was summoned to give John Kennedy his last rites. Jackie, who stood beside the body, joined Father Huber in the prayers. She then took off her wedding ring and slipped it on the dead president's finger.

By now, Johnson was aware that he had become the 36th president at last. He was still sitting in the room, surrounded by Secret Service agents when Malcolm Kilduff suggested to him that a statement should be made about the president's death immediately. By now there were many reporters waiting outside to hear the news. Although they had seen the priest when he arrived at the hospital, there was still no official word. "No, Mac . . . ," said the old vice president, "I think I had better get out of here and get back to the plane before you announce it. We don't know whether there is a worldwide conspiracy, whether they are after me as well as they were after President Kennedy, or whether they are after Speaker McCormack or Senator Hayden. We just don't know."[11] Why, of course Johnson didn't know! And if he didn't, who did? It was not just any

conspiracy, mind you, but one which was "world-wide" too. And the conspirators were after Speaker McCormack and Senator Hayden as well! What a comedy!

Speaker John W. McCormack was next in line for the presidency if Johnson died. Senator Carl Hayden, the presiding officer of the senate, would become president if McCormack died. This sequence of heirs to the throne could not have been in Johnson's mind, especially in a time like this, had he not anticipated Kennedy's death for some time. This was certainly a slip of the tongue even from a talented actor like Lyndon Johnson. It must have made Hoover very angry. In Hoover's book, there was no room for errors. But Johnson was so excited, he couldn't help it. And since the great scheme had worked marvelously—even he could not believe it—he was hypnotized and therefore liable to mistakes.

Otherwise, why on earth would anyone want to kill the aging Speaker of the House?

We shall see shortly that Johnson is going to play the conspiracy record until it is worn out. From the time he left the hospital he would play it to whoever he happened to meet. It is doubtful whether anyone ever thought at the time that it was only a smoke screen. It is equally doubtful if anyone had stopped to think why he was using it so many times.

Indeed, no one had doubted his sincerity. But if we take a closer look at this great con artist and his remarks we are certain to achieve a shocking result:

A. By adding "world-wide" to a conspiracy, he would get the attention off the national scene onto the international one—something from the world of James Bond—thereby forcing people to use wild guesses such as the Soviet KGB, the Chinese, or even Cuba's Castro.

B. Since he was going around singing conspiracy beware, it would be utterly unimaginable to entertain the slightest thought that he had anything to do with it, let alone being the mastermind and the brains behind it. And if anyone would suspect a conspiracy, and many did, he would be the last one on earth to be implicated. Reversed psychology, you see.

C. There was an obvious connection between "world-wide" and Lee Harvey Oswald. Wasn't Oswald a communist after all? Did he not defect to the Soviet Union? Isn't communism an international malady, and isn't international analogous to "world-wide"?

D. Johnson began talking about a "world-wide" conspiracy at Parkland Hospital—a little over an hour BEFORE Oswald was arrested, and before anyone had yet to hear his name. Is it a coincidence that the ALLEGED Kennedy assassin would have a "world-wide" communist inspiration? The answer is a definite NO. Hoover's FBI knew Oswald long before the assassination. They knew his whereabout, his movements, and certainly where he had worked—the famous Book Depository. And if Hoover knew about Oswald, so did Johnson.

Even though Hoover must have assured his partner that this THING would be air-tight and there would be no reason for alarm or apprehension—after all, Hoover's expertise and ingenuity were behind it, and his prestige was on the line, to say the least—Johnson couldn't help but worry. Aside from shouting conspiracy whenever he had the chance, he was also taking the temperature of men around him, mainly Kennedy's loyalists. He put to work his highly sneaky methods in sounding off those men to find out how much they knew, if anything, and whether or not they suspected him of any complicity. Shortly before the funeral, Johnson had a lengthy meeting with Ted Sorensen. ". . . after brushing off [Sorensen's] resignation . . . the president asked, 'What do you think of the possibility of a foreign government being involved in this?' Ted said instantly, 'Do you have any evidence?' The answer was that there were no hard facts. Johnson showed him an FBI memo advising him that the rulers of an unfriendly power had been hoping for Kennedy's death. The report was too hazy for serious consideration. There were no names or facts, and the name of the FBI's informant was in code. 'Meaningless,' said Sorensen, handing it back. The president said nothing."[12] That phony FBI memo was prepared by Hoover to coincide nicely with Oswald's communist background. If indeed it was a genuine report, Hoover would not have hesitated one minute to mention the foreign government by name. Does it make any sense to implicate

another country without knowing which one it was? Could that memo be anything but a diversionary tactic by the two con men to further confuse the American public and to draw its attention from the national scene to imaginary far away and remote lands?

* * *

While Jackie and the president's body were still at the hospital, Johnson left for the airport where two planes were waiting—Air Force One and Air Force Two. Instead of taking his plane—Air Force Two—Johnson decided on Air Force One. After a short while, the widow, the body, and Kennedy's aides arrived at Love airfield. Unaware that Johnson was on Kennedy's plane, they loaded the casket on Air Force One and Jackie left briefly to go to her compartment to "freshen up." As she opened the door of her cabin, she was astonished to find the new president sitting on her bed, busy dictating messages to his secretary.[13] This bizarre behavior on the part of Johnson had raised many an eyebrow. Not only did he use the dead president's plane, but also his bed.*

Ken O'Donnell and others were anxious to leave Dallas as soon as possible. Their hurry to leave the city of death was understandable. All except one man. When O'Donnell asked Johnson if they could take off immediately, he refused. "We can't leave here until I take the oath of office," he said. "I just talked on the phone with Bobby [Kennedy]. He told me to wait here until [Judge] Sarah Hughes gives me the oath . . ."[14] O'Donnell was "flabbergasted." He failed to see the significance behind the oath taking since it is a known fact that a vice president acquires "all the power of the presidency" the minute the president dies.[15] Therefore, taking the oath was simply a "formality" and "Johnson could have waited until he got to Washington and spared all of us . . . especially Jackie, a lot of discomfort and anxiety."[16]

*Air Force One and Air Force Two are identical as far as communication equipment . . . etc. The only thing Air Force Two does not have is the presidential seal.

Hubert H. Humphrey, who later became Johnson's vice president, declared emphatically, "A vice president becomes president when there is no president. Later, when he takes the oath, he puts on the cloak of office. But that act is purely symbolic."[17] President Eisenhower went even a step further when he said that, "Johnson became Chief Executive the moment it was obvious that Kennedy was dying."[18] That is to say that he became president before Kennedy was pronounced dead by Dr. Clark at Parkland Hospital. Johnson undoubtedly had known that. But being desperate as he was to become president, he could not bear any delay, even for a few hours.

After the plane had landed at Andrews Air Force Base, Jackie was trying to explain to Bobby the reason for the delay in Dallas. "He said he'd talked to you, Bobby," she told her brother-in-law, "and that you'd said he had to be sworn in right there in Dallas." The attorney general was very surprised because "he had made no such suggestion."[19] And when O'Donnell met with Bobby later that evening, Bobby explained that when Johnson telephoned him, he told Bobby that "a lot of people down there had advised him to be sworn in right away," and asked whether Bobby had any objections. And the murder, he didn't forget to add, "might be part of a world-wide plot."[20] Bobby said that he "was too surprised to say anything about it." It was hardly the time to be concerned about oath taking. "I said to myself, what's the rush? Couldn't he wait until he got the president's body out of there and back to Washington? Then he began to ask me a lot of questions about who should swear him in. I was too confused and upset to talk to him about it, so I switched him over to Nick Katzenback, who was also perplexed by the whole thing,"[21] Bobby said.

It was hardly an hour and a quarter since Bobby had first heard of the shooting and less than an hour since he had learned that his brother had died. He could not understand Johnson's urgency to take the oath. In his statement to the Warren Commission a few months later, Johnson lied when he said that it was the attorney general who had urged him to take the oath immediately.[22] In that statement he also tried to explain the "problems of urgency" which had arisen due to the fact that, at the time, he did not have "any

That innocent look

. . . to kill, protect and defend . . .

information as to the motivation of the assassination."[23] No doubt about that!! Author William Manchester had invited Johnson to comment on that "misapprehension" regarding the oath-taking. His abrupt reply was that he had "nothing to add to his statement to the Warren Commission."[24]

While Johnson was awaiting Judge Hughes' arrival, he and Lady Bird thought it would be improper not to offer Jackie their condolences. So they went to her bedroom, and all three sat on her bed with Jackie sandwiched in between. As they sat down, the new First Lady started by saying, "Oh, Jackie, you know, we never even wanted to be vice president and now, dear God, it's come to this!"[25] This was followed by silence, then she continued, "I don't know what to say," then she finally said it: "What wounds me most of all is that this should happen in my beloved State of Texas."[26] Oops . . . another slip . . . the truth had finally come out. It was not Kennedy's tragic death that wounded her the most, it was rather the fact that it took place in Texas. Had it happened elsewhere instead, it would not have been so terrible after all.

And as far as their reluctance "to be vice president," the record shows no such reluctance or even the slightest hesitation. If there was any reluctance, it certainly came from the Kennedys; and if there were any regrets, they certainly were not from the Johnsons. To them, the vice presidency came as a pleasant surprise. To John Kennedy it was a fatal mistake.

When Judge Hughes arrived on the plane, Johnson insisted that the widow be present while he took the oath. It was felt by some of Kennedy's aides, however, that "attending the swearing-in might be upsetting to her." But Johnson, still adamant, said to one of the aides, "Why don't you see what's keeping her?"[27] Leaving the body of her husband, Jackie came to the front of the plane where Johnson was about to make history. Her clothes still stained with blood, she stood there watching the new president triumphantly take charge. And as Sorensen wrote, "no one will forget how [the] widow, eyewitness to the lowest level of human brutality, maintained the highest level of human nobility."[28]

His right hand was raised while his left one was placed on Kennedy's personal Bible, Johnson began, "I do solemnly swear . . ." When it was over, he embraced the widow and then pointed to a seat, he said, "Now sit down here honey."[29] And without hesitation he sank himself into the presidential chair and ordered a bowl of bouillon and crackers. After he gulped down the soup, he said "with satisfaction, 'Now we're going.' "[30] Mrs. Kennedy, who up to this moment had been calm, rose to go to the back of the plane where the coffin was. As soon as she sat down next to her husband, she began to cry. "It was the first time she had wept; the tears came in a flood and for a long time she couldn't speak.'[31] All of Kennedy's men and women on the plane were just as pain-stricken and wanted to be with Jackie. But that was impossible due to lack of space. So a "series of individual pilgrimages began, each individual moving slowly back past the presidential chair, now occupied by President Lyndon Johnson."[32]

It was reported that Johnson was told by Ken O'Donnell that it was quite all right for Johnson to use Air Force One instead of Air Force Two. Before the Warren Commission, and in interviews with reporters, Johnson said that O'Donnell "had specifically told him to take Air Force One . . ."[33] O'Donnell, however, remembers "distinctly" that there was absolutely no mention as to which plane Johnson should take. He further testified before the Commission to that effect. He said that Johnson had raised the possibility of a conspiracy and that they both agreed that the new president should leave for the airport as soon as possible. "The president and I had no conversation regarding Air Force One," said O'Donnell, "If we had known that he was going on Air Force One, we would have taken Air Force Two. One plane was just like another."[34] Later a lawyer for the Commission asked O'Donnell if he "would change his testimony so that it would agree with the president's." O'Donnell flatly refused.[35]

A great deal was said and written about the flight from Dallas to Washington and the events which took place aboard that flight. One of those events was the telephone call which Johnson had placed to

the mother of the slain president, Mrs. Rose Kennedy. The new president thought that it would be inhuman not to call the stricken mother and offer his usual condolences. An aide was asked to put the call through to her house in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts. As she was summoned to the phone, the aide said, "The president wants to speak to you." He then immediately corrected himself and said, "Mr. Johnson wants to speak to you," and handed him the receiver. Muffling the receiver with his hand, Johnson looked apprehensively at his wife and whispered, "What can I tell her?"[36] His wife seeing the anguish in his eyes, said nothing. It was not like him. Was he afraid of that woman? And why? After a brief hesitation, he removed his hand and said, "I wish to God there was something I could do," and quickly gave the receiver to Lady Bird who was always willing to play the supporting actress. "We feel like the heart has been cut out of us. Our love and prayers are with you,"[37] she said to Rose.

After he had enough time to recover from the phone call, Johnson came to the back of the plane to ask O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien if they would remain in the new Administration. "I need you now more than President Kennedy needed you," he said. O'Donnell writes, "We heard later that he said the same thing in exactly the same words to everybody else on the White House staff during the next few days."[38] The day after the funeral, Johnson summoned Arthur Schlesinger to the White House. "I just want to say that I need you more than John Kennedy ever needed you," he said. ". . . I have your letter of resignation, and that is fine as a gesture, but I reject it as a fact."[39]

It is not clear why Johnson was interested in keeping on the Kennedy loyalists after their leader had gone. It is equally not clear why he insisted on Kennedy's widow being present while he took the oath. One could only assume that he was so guilt-ridden that he was attempting to illustrate to the grieved nation that he had become president only under the seal of approval and blessings of Kennedy's men and Kennedy's widow. Had they refused to offer him their cooperation when he solicited it, or had they shunned him or

deserted him at once, it would certainly have cast considerable doubt and suspicion around his image in the eyes of the world. This was a clever strategy, well planned in advance. If, on the other hand, Kennedy's death was not planned, and Johnson was innocent of any wrongdoing, he would not have been so sensitive as to what people would say or think. Johnson, to be sure, was not by any means the sensitive type. Nor would he have gone to great pains to persuade the Kennedy loyalists to stay with him. It is unfortunate that none of them had the foresight to recognize his devious intentions.

As Deakin wrote: "With the Easterners who froze him out for many years, Johnson's scatology takes on strong overtones of the bravado that covers up insecurity." If he was crude to them as a vice president "he would be even cruder now. One of the most dignified of Kennedy's cabinet officers . . . was rocked to the depths of his Ivy League soul when he was summoned into conference with the new president and found himself in the bathroom while Johnson bestrode the executive commode. An editor of a Midwestern newspaper attended one of the bathroom conferences when he was called to the Johnson ranch to discuss possible posts in the new administration. Another Kennedy holdover asserts that he was summoned to the ranch early one morning and directed into the bathroom, where he sat on the side of the tub and received his instructions for the day while Johnson obtained relief. The Kennedy man says he mentioned the incident later to a woman who had been a member of Johnson's staff for years. 'What's so unusual about that?' she replied. 'He's been doing that with me for years.' "[40]

One would think that Johnson, who had always been suspicious of men from the eastern establishment, and whose claim to their lack of respect and difference toward him was not the product of his imagination, would be more than eager to dispose of them once the opportunity became feasible. Having to endure the pain of keeping those men around him, especially after all what they did to him as vice president, was not in the least a mystery. It was part of an overall coverup plan to give the false appearance that not the slightest animosity had ever taken place between the two camps, thus

further removing any suspicion away from him. It was a clever move planned well in advance. For a man like Johnson, who cherished loyalty, he surely was aware that those were Kennedy men and were going to remain so for the rest of their lives. With the exception of Robert McNamara, most of them vanished in a hurry—some in a few weeks, some in a few months—but they vanished, leaving the stage to an all Texan cast.

Johnson's first few days in office were crowded not so much with the heavy schedule of the presidency as with strange episodes that require the most careful attention. One of those episodes took place the night after the assassination. On that night, Johnson asked his aide Horace Busby "to stay with him in the bedroom until he went to sleep. A half-hour after the lights had been turned off, Busby tiptoed quietly around the bed toward the door. 'Buz,' the voice came from the darkness, 'Buz, is that you?' Yes it was. 'Buz, I'm not asleep yet.' Busby returned to his chair, waited again until he was certain the president was asleep, and again got up to leave. 'Buz, are you still there?' the voice called out. Once more Busby returned to his vigil. This time he waited a full hour before he could leave."[41] Many a grown-up man may find it hard to sleep for various reasons; and it is understandable. But not many grown-ups are afraid of the dark. When they are, it is usually for a good reason. On the first night after the murder, Kennedy's body was lain in its coffin in the East Room. His ghost, however, had slipped out in the dark unnoticed, and came to Lyndon's bedroom to avenge his innocent blood. When King Hamlet was killed by his brother Claudius, so that he could marry his wife, the late King's ghost appeared in the dark to talk to Hamlet's son urging him to kill his father's murderer, who had married Queen Gertrude, the widow, almost immediately. Said the Ghost:

I am they father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away.

'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abus'd; but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

Sam Houston Johnson was surprisingly candid in his book My Brother Lyndon. He writes that "politicians are . . . the most sanctimonious hypocrites" in the country. "Even those politicians . . . who play it straight and narrow in financial matters have different kinds of skeletons in their closets. There isn't a single man in Congress . . . who hasn't stepped on someone climbing up the ladder, who hasn't double-crossed a friend, who hasn't fudged on his campaign promises, who hasn't committed some act that nibbles at his conscience in the middle of the night."[42]

Sam recalls a telephone call he had received from his brother shortly after he became president. " . . . Lyndon's voice came over the wire. 'Hi, Sam Houston, how y' doing?'

'Fine, Lyndon, everything's fine here . . . I imagine you're pretty busy,' I said.

'Never been busier,' he said. 'But I have been waiting for a chance to talk with you and to let you know how much I appreciate all you've done for me, Sam Houston. I wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for you.'

'Lyndon,' I said. 'I had nothing to do with Oswald.' He gasped, sputtered and then exploded. My God, what an explosion! I have never heard him so angry. 'Goddammit, Sam!' he shouted. 'What the hell kind of a remark is that?' He went on like that, getting angrier and angrier, for about twenty minutes. And I kept expecting him to slam the phone down like a sledgehammer, but he went on talking at full fury. Finally, in a tired somewhat despairing voice, he said, 'I'll call you some other time.' "[43]

Sam Houston, unaware of how his brother became president, was obviously making an innocent joke. And Lyndon, had he been

innocent, would not have exploded so vehemently. It was an explosion Sam had never witnessed before. Had he been innocent, he would have reacted differently, especially when the joke teller was his own brother. His reaction would have been much milder . . . something like this: "No Sam, this is not a funny subject," or "No Sam, this is not a laughing matter." Granted, the joke was in bad taste, but it was a harmless joke, nevertheless. It should not have caused such an outrage which lasted twenty minutes. Here we find the element of surprise at work. It was the most unexpected kind of a remark to Johnson's guilty conscience. Without knowing, Sam had clumsily stepped over a deeply hidden, yet live, wire that touched off a gigantic explosion. Taken by surprise, the otherwise calm Johnson was badly shaken.

Lyndon was never sensitive to bad jokes. On the contrary, he was known for telling tasteless and crude jokes. Deakin writes that, "some of Johnson's stories reveal the coarsening, almost brutalizing effect of his years in the slaughterhouse politics of the Lone Star State. One of his favorite jokes concerns a popular Texas sheriff who was running for reelection. The sheriff's opponents had been trying unsuccessfully to think of a good campaign issue to use against him. Finally, one man suggested that 'we spread a rumor that he fucks pigs.' Another protested that 'you know he doesn't do that.'

'I know,' said the first man, 'but let's make the sonofabitch deny it.' "[44]

That telephone incident had indeed surprised Sam Houston who knew of his brother's ability to control his temper. Ever since Lyndon was a small boy, wrote Sam, he was known for his ability to control his anger and keep it all to himself. He would "merely set his mouth tight, never saying a word."[45]

There is no question that the telephone incident, one of many, was nothing less than a clear-cut evidence that Johnson's only alternative to the presidency was murder.

* * *

In Washington, Air Force One was finally approaching the runway for a landing. Aboard, Jackie was still wearing her blood-stained dress. Repeatedly she was urged to change and repeatedly she refused. "Let them see what THEY've done."[46] The body was removed from the plane and put into an ambulance which departed at once to Bethesda Naval Hospital. Accompanying the body were the president's widow and his younger brother. Four minutes after the ambulance had departed, the new president descended the ramp and was greeted by Robert McNamara and Mike Mansfield. He shook hands with his well wishers saying pensively, "It's terrible, terrible."[47] He gave Walter Jenkins a nod of recognition and "plodded forward with his peculiar stride," passing by Hubert Humphrey, Earl Warren and Averell Harriman. Justice Arthur Goldberg was present but declined to step forward to greet the new president. Later in the evening Goldberg's home telephone rang and the caller was Lyndon Johnson. He wanted to know why Goldberg "hadn't come forward to shake his hand."[48] Goldberg simply indicated that his sole purpose of being at the airport was to "meet the coffin of President Kennedy."[49] He had come to pay his "respects to the body." To Goldberg, it was insignificant whether or not he shook hands with Johnson. To Johnson, it was a different situation, and it was peculiar that he should be concerned about trivia such as this, on a day like this, with all its shattering and earth-shaking events. Still, the question remained in Johnson's mind as to why Goldberg did not run forward to shake his hand as the others did. Did he know something he was not supposed to know? Curiosity kills the assassin.

Before leaving the airport, Johnson read a statement which was written, revised and then re-written on the plane. He said, "This is a sad time for all people [including myself and J. Edgar] . . . I ask for your help—and God's."

At Bethesda, the subject of the oath came up once again. The Attorney General, still perplexed, reaffirmed to Ken O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien that he "had not urged Johnson to take the oath on the plane." Ken and Larry did not speak and all three exchanged wondering looks . . ."[50]

Again the widow was urged to change her clothes, and again she refused. They understood how she felt and left her alone to think and then rethink the horrors of that day. Like her, they wondered why it happened and what good could possibly come out of it. Nothing but the evil, thought Hamlet:

> It is not nor it cannot come to good.
> But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

"All my life I've believed that something worthwhile comes out of everything, no matter how terrible it is," said O'Donnell. "What good can come out of this?" [51] And Sorensen refused to believe that such a tragedy could be the work of one lunatic. "For a man as controversial, yet beloved as John Kennedy to be killed for no real reason or cause denies us even the slight satisfaction of drawing some meaning or moral from his death." [52] Sorensen did not know that Kennedy's death was the highlight of an American coup d'etat.

What may appear to be a disaster to some, is heavenly beneficial to others. And if life is valued and cherished by all of us, death is not without rewards. Mortician Joe Gawler, telephoned his funeral home to inquire whether there had been a "contact" from the Kennedy family. [53] Funeral homes, it must be acknowledged, comprise a major segment in the structure of our economy. They employ thousands of people and their shares are traded on the stock exchanges. And if such organizations are kept in low profile, it is because of the grisly fact that the very nature of their survival is dependent upon our demise. Some funeral homes have gone to great pains in order to change the old image of the undertaker—the skinny, bald-headed Dracula-type man in a black suit. Some have been occupying prime time on radio and television in an attempt to shake off that old image and bring instead sexy, young gals to do the grim job. But no matter how successful they may become, they will never occupy an envious position in the strata of professionalism. For their morbid task, though necessary, should be avoided or postponed for as long as we can live.

At Bethesda that evening, the thought of how such a tragedy could have been avoided was undoubtedly of little consolation. The unavoidable ifs were persistent, nevertheless . . . If the president had fallen ill and his trip to Texas was cancelled, he would have escaped the ambush which had been awaiting him in Dallas . . . at least temporarily anyway. If he had not been so careless as to ride in an open car, or if he had not brushed aside the argument against the wisdom of the trip from men like Fullbright and Byron Skelton, his life might have been spared. And finally, if he were a believer in the phenomenon that the world was not all goodness—but that evil, venomous evil—is existent side by side; and that a vice president, with a harmless look on his face might be burning with malignant hatred and thus plotting the crime of the century.

Kennedy, however, "was not a man to hide." He was, like Churchill, a believer "that courage was the one quality which guaranteed all the rest." [54] Nevertheless, the trip to Dallas was not made without a certain degree of skepticism. The late president was neither overjoyed nor did he cherish the idea of intervening in Texas' internal affairs. For the sole purpose behind the trip, it had been alleged, was to bring together the "warring factions" of that state and, thus, healing the Democratic Party of its wounds. Nothing could have been more idiotic. Yet at the time, the trip to Texas did not appear as a pretext behind which a top secret plot to murder the president was, indeed, on the drawing board.

The skepticism was there because the president was by no means an idol in the eyes of conservative Texans. And because of his liberal views, mainly those on civil rights, he was neither liked nor admired; and by many, he was even mistrusted. Kennedy was not unaware of those hinderances and consequently, had viewed the whole matter with mixed feelings. Had it not been for Johnson's sly and devious tactics of persuasion, the trip might have been cancelled. From that trip, Johnson's great expectations were hanging only by a thread. To make or not to make the trip, was the question which changed the course of history.

It was reported that "Kennedy was tired and irritated . . . [before the trip] because vice president Johnson had forced him, in a long

and bitter argument, into making the trip to Texas against his will." [55] With the 1964 election year approaching, "the Democrats in Texas were split into two warring factions . . . and Johnson . . . had insisted on the president going down there to patch things up. It appeared to Kennedy, one reporter wrote, that 'Johnson ought to be able to resolve this petty dispute himself; the trip seemed to be an imposition.' "[56]

An imposition it might have been, but a trap is what it was all about. Is it logical that Kennedy, a foreigner as far as Texas was concerned, could do what a Texan could not in his home state? And how is it conceivable that Johnson, with all his polished tactfulness in the art of persuasion and manipulation, would become suddenly ineffective and helpless in the face of a "petty dispute," especially when such a dispute is between his fellow Texans??

* * *

At 1:45 p.m. Friday, November 22, 1963, the attorney general's phone rang at his home in Virginia. The caller was J. Edgar Hoover. "I have news for you. The president's been shot," he told Bobby in a toneless voice. "How serious?" inquired the president's brother. "I think it's serious," said the director. He added that he did not have any details but would call Bobby back when he found out more about it. He hung up.[57] The director fulfilled his promise and called again shortly afterwards to give Bobby the final result of his almost perfect achievement.

Hoover could not have been more proud of his Bureau. He could not have been happier and more relieved. He would no longer have the nagging little attorney general to dictate to him what to do. He is once again the head of the entire Justice Department. He would not have to worry about being forced to retire. With his accomplice now in the White House, there was nothing more he could ask for or hope for. The happy days were back again. What an ordeal those three years must have been for him. But it's all over now. He is proud and content. He can sit back and enjoy the fruits of his most ingenious achievement. It was a clean job. No traces and no mistakes.

The executioner, whom Hoover's men had picked to do the job, did not disappoint him. He did not embarrass the Bureau! His hands did not shake while pulling the trigger, nor did his knees give way at the last moment.

And in an hour or so a suspect would be picked up, someone they already know who would fit in perfectly. He is a young hoodlum, a drifter and a communist who had defected to Russia. His rifle would appear mysteriously on the floor where he used to work. It would have to be fired shortly before it was hidden conspiciously, so that the world would get to know it as the "murder weapon." What could be more fitting than that? The young boy would then be sacrificed forty-eight hours later because death is the only guarantee to silence and tranquility. Hoover would then come out and tell the gullible nation that the boy had acted alone out of sheer madness. A strip joint operator, with underworld connections, was chosen to slaughter the scapegoat. He too had acted alone out of sheer madness. The American people would have to buy that, and why shouldn't they? Don't they have respect and admiration for Hoover anymore? Don't they trust his knowledge, judgment and, above all, his integrity? After all, isn't he the nation's self-appointed guardian against dangerous criminals and communist pickaboos? It would be insane to doubt his judgment, let alone his sinlessness and incorruptibility.

"The president's dead," Hoover informed the attorney general triumphantly. He did not express any "compassion," nor did he seem in the least upset. Bobby recalled afterward that the Director was "not quite as excited as if he were reporting the fact that he had found a communist on the faculty of Howard University."[58] Hoover, whose office was on the same floor with Bobby's, "never walked over to offer his condolences." He did not even bother to send a telegram.[59] Hoover saw no need for "compassion," it was never part of his style . . . much less now.

In his recent book Robert Kennedy and his Times, Arthur Schlesinger writes, "Hoover was a professional bureaucrat of remarkable gifts . . . a man of exceptional intelligence [and] alertness . . . he had far more power and fame than his nominal chiefs. Attorneys general

came and went. J. Edgar Hoover was there, it seemed forever."[60] But all good things must come to an end, and the year 1960 was a turning point. Hoover was quite dismayed by John Kennedy's Presidency, and doubly dismayed by Kennedy's surprise appointment of his brother to be Hoover's superior. Shortly after the election, Clyde Tolson observed sourly, "We'll be stuck with the Kennedy clan till the year 2000."[61] Hoover's relationship with the new attorney general was from the beginning, very strained and "very distant," and he regarded the new president "with skepticism" and "distrust," and the feeling on Kennedy's part was no less than mutual.

Hoover was fond of spreading damaging gossip about government officials to presidents and attorneys general from time to time as part of a routine and helpful service which his bureau was used to rendering. But unlike other presidents, John Kennedy was not "beguiled by such a service. He didn't like to hear about their sex life . . . [or] whether they drank . . ." This lack of response had irritated the Director. It was said that he had once sent to Kennedy a report describing a U.S. ambassador who was caught in a woman's bedroom and hastily departed through a window forgetting his trousers. When the president failed to congratulate Hoover on such a splendid service, his feelings were hurt. He later queried about it through a presidential aide. "Yes," said the aide, "the president has read it," and his reaction was that "from now on he's going to hire faster ambassadors."[62] Not accustomed to such indifference and lack of recognition, Hoover became very resentful. Bobby once said that Hoover "was really of no importance" to him.

Not only was Bobby disrespectful, but he made it clear to him that he intended to exercise his superiority over the Bureau. And as Schlesinger observed; "for Hoover the very existence of an attorney general who was the brother of the president represented an unprecedented threat."[64] That threat was magnified in 1963 due to speculation and remarks by the attorney general that the director would be dumped. In his biography entitled J. Edgar Hoover, Ralph de Toledano wrote, "For the first time in his career, Hoover was forced to deal with an administration that was overly hostile, that

wanted him out."[65] The idea that the Kennedys were in the process of getting rid of him had "seized possession of his mind," and the mere mention of a successor was unbearable to him.* On one occasion, Ethel Kennedy, who disliked Hoover, came out in support of William H. Parker, the Chief of Police in Los Angeles. Parker was known to be on Hoover's long list of enemies, and in defiance to Hoover, Ethel put a note in the FBI suggestion box which read, "Chief Parker . . . for Director."[66]

Hoover became the Director of the FBI in 1924, one year before Bobby Kennedy was born. Since then, he had dedicated all his life to that organization until it became an integral part of him, and he of it. The FBI was everything to him. He had no hobbies, no interests and no family. But he had the Bureau. To take it away from him would have been a severe blow to his pride and sanity, and a real catastrophe he could not bear. Thus, having been "convinced that the Kennedys were out to get him," wrote Schlesinger, "Hoover resorted to his . . . technique of self-defense."[67] And his only technique of defending himself was getting rid of the Kennedys.

In an interview by Anthony Lewis, Bobby Kennedy was asked whether he thought Hoover was dangerous or whether his power was somewhat exaggerated. "I think he's dangerous,"[68] replied Bobby. He also told John Bartlow Martin that Hoover was "rather a psycho" and his FBI was a "very dangerous organization," to the point where it had "become rather frightening."[69] It was for this reason, that the Kennedys were planning his retirement in 1964, and not because he was aging, as most people thought. And it was also for this reason, that Bobby had actively meddled with the Bureau and its operations, much to the irritation and chagrin of Hoover. Until the Kennedys came into the picture, the FBI was off limits to everyone, presidents and attorneys general included. The Kennedys' close supervision over the Bureau and its director was, in Hoover's opinion, a great sin punishable only by death.

*Byron White and Adam Yarmolinsky were among the possible candidates to succeed Hoover in 1964. As a result, Hoover was reported leaking items to the press in order to discredit them.

Hoover's deep hatred for the Kennedys was by no means a secret. According to Jack Anderson of the New York Post, Hoover had told Herbert Jenkins, the Atlanta Police Chief, "that the three enemies he hated most in the world were Kennedy, King* and Quinn Tamm, a former FBI assistant director . . ."[70]

While Hoover was not born a diplomat, Johnson certainly was. It could be safely said that this small difference in personalities was perhaps the only noticeable factor which separated them from one another. While Hoover did not have much need for diplomacy and tact, Johnson surely did. One was a cop with an already secure post and a well established and fearful reputation. The other was a born politician who had much need for demagoguery and connivance, and whose degree of survival depended a great deal on how good an actor he was able to be. This could easily explain the clear difference between their attitudes, remarks, and comments following the assassination. While Johnson went out of his way pretending how shocked and saddened he was, Hoover showed little or no sign of grief or compassion. And while Johnson played the conspiracy act to the hilt, Hoover either did not know how to perform such an act, or saw no need for doing it. Notwithstanding, both men had shared the same misfortune of the Kennedy Administration with all the humiliation, the ill treatment and above all the fear of being dumped. Like Hoover, Johnson was deeply frustrated. Unlike him, he wanted to be president. Both men found themselves on the same ship headed for disaster, and unless they could dispose of the captain and take control, their future was doomed. Their mutiny was regarded as an absolute necessity if they should stay alive. For they knew that the first desert island they would come to, they were going to be mercilessly thrown overboard and left to die in oblivion, while the ship proceeded with vigor to the more glamorous ports of call.

*Between 1963 and 1968, President Kennedy, his brother, and Dr. King were all murdered. One wonders whether those killings were three acts in a big play—produced and directed by Hoover and Johnson.

* * *

Back in Dallas, the news of Oswald's death had stirred a lot of controversy and many unanswered questions. The news of the "lone" assassin being executed by a lone "patriot" named Jack Ruby, was hard to swallow. People had hoped that Oswald, if indeed he were the killer, would be brought to trial so that there would be at least some gratification from knowing why he had killed Kennedy and whether or not he was hired by someone else to do the grim task. Instead people were disheartened by his death because their curiosity was left without a satisfactory climax. As a result of his death, the door was left wide open to many allegations, speculations and rumors.

Bleeding internally, Oswald was administered artificial respiration by a Dallas police detective, who was supposedly not aware that "artificial respiration was the worst conceivable treatment for abdominal injuries."[74] The timing of his death was most inappropriate since it seemed almost an intrusion to a nation already stricken with grief.

While most people were still in shock due to Kennedy's sudden and brutal murder, one man was deeply concerned about the damaging effects on his country's reputation around the world as a result of Oswald's inexplicable death. As he was leaving the Oval Office, Johnson saw the attorney general and immediately put his acting gear in motion. "We've got to do something," said the new president, "We've got to get involved. It's giving the United States a bad name around the world."[72] Kennedy said later that he was appalled by Johnson's remark since world opinion was hardly the issue at a time like this. It was hardly "the thing foremost in my mind,"[73] he said. And since when did world opinion ever disturb Johnson's conscience? Hadn't his vulgar mannerism been a total disgrace while travelling abroad as vice president? And was Oswald's death damaging to this country's reputation, while the savage slaying of a president was not? And was he concerned about world opinion or even the national one when the atrocities of Vietnam had caused people in the four corners of the globe to burn the American flag or stamp it with their feet? It is these inconsistencies in Johnson's

remarks, coupled with his obvious phoniness that leaves absolutely no doubt in the mind as to his major role in the conspiracy.

One of the motives behind the assassination was to knock out the attorney general. This was Hoover's major incentive in collaborating with Johnson. Once his brother was dead, he would be totally helpless, and the most powerful attorney in the land would become the most powerless. Hoover had actually pulled the rug from underneath him and stripped him of all his rank. While Kennedy was alive, Bobby had superiority over both Hoover and Johnson. But with Kennedy gone, the situation was reversed and Johnson took over the entire command. The attorney general was there, but no one paid any attention to him. And as Sullivan put it, "The game was all over."

Although Bobby became suspicious when he first heard of Oswald's death, there wasn't much he could do. "It's too bad about that shooting of that fellow in Dallas," he told Nick Katzenback.[74] He did not have a chance to defend himself. His guilt or innocence, undoubtedly his innocence, could not be determined in a court of law, with cross-examination of witnesses—most of whom had either lied under oath due to pressure and threats from FBI agents, or were not allowed by the Commission to tell the whole story as they saw it.[75] Critics of the Commission, some of whom are notable attorneys, flatly stated that Oswald would have been acquitted had he lived to be tried with all due process of the law. But to Hoover and Johnson, such an acquittal would have been a true disaster beyond the stretch of the imagination. They would have had to find someone else in a hurry and then have him killed . . . also in a hurry.

It is doubtful that Earl Warren himself ever believed a word of his own Report. But the late Supreme Court Justice was a wise man. He very well knew that disclosing the truth to the nation would have had greater implications than withholding it. He did what he thought was best for the country. In his own words, he admitted that, ". . . because of the difficulty of proving negatives to a certainty, the possibility of others being involved . . . cannot be established categorically,"[76] and that the truth about the assassination might not be known in our "lifetime."

As the rotten fumes of a conspiracy were smoldering the air following Oswald's death, it became apparent that a quieting serum had to be injected in the arm of a suspicious nation. That serum was the celebrated Warren Commission. But the treatment proved ineffective and temporary because most people were not convinced of the Commission's findings. General Maxwell Taylor said, "that the killing of Oswald by Ruby had been done to suppress something."[77] And Walter Cronkite talked about the "disturbing indications" of a possible "link between Oswald and various intelligence agencies of the United States."[78] The word "possible" was inaccurate since Oswald did indeed have a "link" with the FBI. This was later confirmed by the Commission in its Report.[79] But Ralph Dungan's prediction was accurate when he heard of Oswald's death. He said that "[now] they'll blame it all on that twenty-four year-old boy."[80] The Anti-Defamation Committee of B'nai B'rith later confirmed the findings of professional polls, which showed that most Americans were convinced that Oswald's death had to be "the result of organized plotting." Conspiracy, the Committee believed, was the only logical and reasonable conclusion.[81]

Oswald's bewildered look following his arrest seemed to indicate not only his innocence, but also his ignorance of what his arrest was all about. Most people who came in contact with him in the first hour after his arrest, seem to agree. He would not have been that good of an actor, especially if he had just killed the president of the United States. According to the Commission, Oswald was unloved as a child and as a result, he craved for recognition all his life.[82] Assuming this was true, and that he killed the president to fulfill his unfulfilled need for fame and recognition, it would have been the more reason for him to admit his crime, or even brag about it.

Almost from the first hour of his arrest, Oswald was branded as the president's assassin. He was never "alleged" or "suspected" or "supposed" or "surmised"; he was, is, and forever will be the culprit. There is no way to prove otherwise. There hasn't been a way for fifteen years and there never will be. Thus, the compartment in which he was put, had been sealed forever, and all attempts to open

it for ventilation have failed. The last attempt was the investigation by the House Select Committee on Assassinations. It too had followed the same trails which were followed so many times in the past. A lot of money was spent and nothing worthwhile was achieved. After two years and more than $5 million of taxpayers' money, they gave us no new revelations.[83] What the distinguished members of the Committee failed to realize, is that in a conspiracy, there are no records, no files, and no memos. Everything is destroyed on the spot or soon after.

In the spring of 1975, long after Hoover had been dead and buried, a few Congressional bodies began investigating many charges against the FBI and its abuse of power. There were reasons to believe that Hoover "had purged some files in the year before his death, and others were either shredded by his secretary immediately after his death, or were moved to his home to be placed in the custody of Clyde Tolson."[84] As a result, Senator John A. Pastore, among others, was reported to be outraged. It was a "sad commentary on a democratic and open society,"[85] said the senator. What is really sad is that no investigation of Hoover's abuse of power or even an outrage because of it, ever took place while the director was still among the living.

Jack Ruby, who was assigned to kill Oswald, had no difficulty locating him in the Dallas jailhouse. Not only was he allowed to enter as if he were one of the patrolmen, but he was left to browse around unhindered. He came "equipped with horn-rimmed spectacles, a notebook, and the lie that he was a translator for the Israeli press . . ."[86] At 12:30 p.m. November 22, the "bogus translator" was at the Dallas News placing an advertisement for his two night clubs. Although he insisted that he loved Kennedy, he did not bother to walk four blocks away to see the presidential motorcade. And after he killed Oswald he would cry with anger whenever Kennedy's name was mentioned, but all the time he had been waiting to kill him since the evening of November 22, he had been cheerful and not in the least saddened by the assassination. His allegation that he killed Oswald to spare Mrs. Kennedy the ordeal of a trial was too out-

landish to believe. "His professed admiration of Kennedy," wrote Manchester, "was a patent fraud . . . designed to dignify his motive."[87] Ruby's attorney declared that his client killed Oswald because of an "irresistable patriotic impulse."[88] Only three minutes before he killed Oswald, Ruby was at the Western Union office sending a money order. The distance between Western Union and the police headquarters is 350 feet or a minute walk.[89] Yet, when Oswald emerged from the elevator, Ruby was there ready with a gun in his hand. Such precise timing could not have been a coincidence. His presence at the very moment when Oswald was due to be transferred to another jail was a "positive proof of police collusion in a complex conspiracy."[90]

While Ruby was planning to kill Oswald for strictly patriotic reasons, Henry Wade, the Dallas District Attorney, was no less of a patriot himself. Shortly after Oswald's arrest, he gave a news conference in which he stated with complete assurance that "I figure we have sufficient evidence to convict him."[91] But when a reporter asked him whether or not Oswald was represented by a lawyer, he replied, "I don't know whether he has one or not."[92] The assertion of Oswald's immediate guilt was not only a flagrant violation by the district attorney, but also a clear indication of his complicity in the matter. For it was he who declared two days later, with the same air of confidence, that there was absolutely "no indication of collusion in any form between Ruby and the Dallas police."[93] Yet, when he was asked whether he thought it was rather unusual for Ruby to be at the security-tight, well guarded police basement, his reply was, "I haven't been here since last night, so I don't know anything about it."[94]

These examples were only a few frames in a long reel of a circus movie produced and directed by the honorable district attorney and his assistant producer, the Dallas chief of police. Finally when the cries of anger and indignation had reached Washington, Lyndon Johnson was forced to act quickly if he were to survive. For he knew that sooner or later, perhaps sooner, the grand conspiracy would be traced back to its original birthplace—Washington. At the moment,

and in a somewhat panicky situation, he could call on no one to come to his rescue except his dear old accomplice, the honorable J. Edgar. Together they decided that a hasty FBI investigation of the assassination would be conducted, followed by a fabricated report which would be released to the public "the moment it was ready."[95] This, Hoover advised Johnson, should be quite sufficient to tranquilize the agitated nation and put all rumors to sleep. After all, who in his right mind would doubt the integrity of J. Edgar Hoover. And anyone who did would simply be labeled as un-American doing a disservice to his country. Johnson, however, was unsure that an FBI report, with all its prestige, would be enough to do the trick. He wanted something more spectacular like a commission of some sort. Such a commission, he hoped, would be more impressive than an FBI report. There was only one catch; the commission would be an all Texas commission, "with all non-Texans, and federal officials, excluded."[96] He would then delegate as its head some one such as the Dallas district attorney, for whom Johnson had great admiration and respect.

The idea of an all-Texas commission, however, was overruled in a last minute debate by one of Johnson's life-long comrades—Abe Fortas. "He bluntly labeled Johnson's idea a ghastly mistake,"[97] because it would be highly presumptuous. An all-Texas commission, Fortas argued, would only add complications to an already complicated situation. It would make the loud cries for the truth even louder, and the already distrustful nation more distrustful.

Finally Johnson came to his senses and decided to embark on a big gamble which may or may not work in his favor. The idea of a commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, though it would certainly be the right medicine, might cause some side effects. Such a commission may tend to dig deeper into the matter and therefore become counter-productive. Hoover assured the new president that, regardless of which commission or committee he selected, its final verdict would not be contradictory to that of the Bureau. For it is basically the Bureau's fabricated findings and phony conclusions that the commission's report would depend upon. And now that Bobby

was completely harmless, and Hoover is once again running the Justice Department, the curtain would soon fall on the final act of America's greatest comic opera.

But what if the Chief Justice turned down the phony assignment? What if he smelled a rat? Well, that would be the least of Johnson's concerns. His persuasive skill and high pressure salesmanship had never failed before. Besides, who was going to say no to the president? So, the Chief Justice was summoned to the White House and was not allowed to leave until he nodded approvingly. He was told that it was in the service of his country that he should accept.[98] He was finally conned into accepting and Johnson won a great victory. But it was a tragic defeat to truth and justice. It was equally tragic for a man such as Earl Warren with his fine record and unblemished reputation, to allow his arm to be twisted by the greatest con artist of this century. The question one might ask is whether or not the Chief Justice had any notion that he was being used, and that the entire investigation was designed to be nothing more than a camouflage to further delude and confuse the American people. The answer is a shocking YES. He was certainly aware that he was being used. His reluctance to accept was not because he was "against extracurricular activity by judges seemed rather unconvincing."[99] In his own words, Warren describes the meeting which took place between him and Johnson,

"... the President told me how serious the situation was. He said there had been wild rumors, and that there was the international situation to think of. He said he had just talked to Dean Rusk, who was concerned, and he also mentioned the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, who had told him how many millions of people would be killed in an atomic war. The only way to dispel these rumors, he said, was to have an independent and responsible commission, and that there was no one to head it except the highest judicial officer in the country. I told him how I felt. He said that if the public became aroused against Castro and Khrushchev there might be war.

"You've been in uniform before," he said, "and if I asked you, you would put on the uniform again for your country."

I said, "Of course."

"This is more important than that," he said.

"If you're putting it like that," I said, "I can't say no."[100]

Notice that Warren did not say anything while Johnson was talking about World War III. He kept quiet while listening to all the trashy claptrap and double talk about Khrushchev and a nuclear war, where millions of people were going to die. Was he being polite and accommodating, or did he really believe in that preposterous comedy? No one knows for sure. Whatever the case may be, the appointment of Earl Warren was purely "for public consumption" since the "real work" was done by assistants and young lawyers.[101] And as Johnson had anticipated, the commission's verdict had its quieting effects, at least temporarily. This was the lull that he had hoped for in order for him to concentrate on the more pressing and important business of the Republic, such as getting elected in 1964. In fact, he insisted that the Report be finished before the November election. The Commission complied and it was published on September 24, 1964.[102]

While the Report had somewhat accomplished its mission in this country by reducing the consumption of sleeping pills, in most other countries, however, it was dismissed as a sly attempt by the government to suppress evidence. Foreign reporters who came to Dallas to conduct their own separate investigations were met by hostility and harrassment from FBI agents. Their treatment was reminiscent of what they might have encountered if they were in East Germany or the Soviet Union.

The result of the Warren Commission's findings, which came out in September '64, was the same as reading a year old newspaper. A year earlier, on December 9, 1963, the FBI report was submitted to the Commission. But even before that report was submitted, news of Oswald being the lone assassin had leaked out to newspapers all over the country. The only one source for the leak the FBI.[103] This leakage was done in spite of the Commission's insistence that "nothing be made public until it had reviewed the [FBI] document and taken whatever action it may feel appropriate." Nevertheless, in

December '63, headlines in many newspapers (including the reputable New York Times), read "Oswald Assassin Beyond A Doubt, FBI Concludes."[104] This proves only one thing: Hoover not only had no respect for Warren's request to keep the matter confidential, but was purposely forcing him not to conduct any further investigations than what was already in the FBI document. In any event, Hoover's report was done and completed all in three weeks. That was all the time his Bureau needed to investigate a crime of such magnitude. Ruby's trial, however, did not begin until February 17, 1964. Yet the FBI's report, which was finalized and submitted on December 9, 1963 concluded that there was no link between Ruby and Oswald.

Back in Dallas, the trial of Jack Ruby was already underway. During the trial it became evident that the district attorney had a delicate problem. He was obliged to "refrain from asking any questions that might reopen the Oswald case," and so he avoided putting any pressure on Ruby that might make him change his story and "admit that he had not acted spontaneously."[105] The district attorney was even more cautious than the defense in "avoiding any suggestion that Ruby might have acted for reasons not related exclusively to his personal psych."[106]

Four days after the trial had begun, the late Dorothy Kilgallen of the New York American Journal revealed that an "arrangement" had been made between the FBI and Ruby's lawyers by which they would receive "reams of helpful information" from the FBI "on the condition that they do not ask for anything at all about Ruby's victim, Lee Harvey Oswald."[107] Miss Kilgallen was referring to an FBI letter dated January 28, 1964, which was sent to Ruby's lawyers. The letter stated that the FBI had been instructed to provide names and addresses of various persons who might be useful to the defense, except for ". . . information concerning Oswald's assassination of the President [which] will not be available as it does not appear to be relevant."[108] This irrelevancy was followed "scrupulously" by the district attorney throughout Ruby's trial.[109] In his book The Oswald Affair, Leo Sauvage wrote, "I do not know on what rules or precedents . . . that information about the victim's

crime was not relevant, when the victim's murder was a direct result of that crime."[110]

* * *

The mood in Washington following Kennedy's death was that of gloom and distress. The new president was enjoying his first day in office, while chaos and grief were the order of the day. His attitude on that day gave the impression that he had just landed from another planet. Describing Johnson's mood the first day after the assassination, George Ready said that while "everything was chaotic, only the president knew what he was doing." Some attributed the command performance to his experience in the senate, while others thought of it in terms of strong nerves and an ability to weather the storm. But no one ever thought of it in terms of exuberance caused by a final triumph and rebirth. Nor could anyone hardly suspect that that first day had been anticipated and rehearsed many months in advance down to the last detail, and that is why Johnson seemed to know what he was doing, while everyone else was thrown off balance. And on that first day, while Kennedy's body was still lying in the East Room, Johnson was already planning the strategy of the 1964 election. He told flabbergasted Ken Galbraith, "I want to come down very hard on civil rights, not because Kennedy was for it, but because I am for it."[111] And in his State of the Union Message a few days later he said, "I urge you . . . to enact a civil rights law . . ."[112] Jack Bell observed that, "almost from the moment he took the presidential oath, Johnson had been unfolding a master plan designed to win the presidency in his own right and . . . to carve for himself a favorable place in history."[113]

Observing Johnson in his first day as president was almost like watching a lion in the African jungle devouring his catch after a long period of painful hunger. Yet he would tell the British Ambassador, David Ormsby-Gore, who came to pay him a courtesy visit, "If my family took a vote on whether or not I'd stay, there'd be three*

*A wife and two daughters.

votes for quitting right away—and maybe four."[114] He told others that he almost resigned as president if it were not for Lady Bird who persuaded him to "hold on."[115]

Averell Harriman was another courtesy visitor on that day. He told Harriman, "You know I've always thought of you as one of my oldest and best friends in Washington."[116] And as Harriman exited Sargent Shriver entered. "Well, Sarge," said Johnson, "it's a terrible thing. I'm completely overwhelmed, but I do want to say that I've always had a very high regard for you."[117]

Lyndon Johnson's first day in the presidency, however, was only a warm-up drill to his animalistic lust for power which had grown rusty after three years of neglect and disuse. Now he was alive and polished again. He was no longer a passenger on the ship of destiny; instead he was now the captain, and he was very much in command—at least for now anyway. For in a few short years, his lust for more and more power will blind him and his Titanic will sink in the turbulent waters of Vietnam, dragging down with it its despicable pirate, and a nation bleeding with great sorrow and disdain.

"Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden . . ." —John F. Kennedy

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